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# NOTES ON POLITICS AND HISTORY

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# NOTES ON POLITICS AND HISTORY

## A UNIVERSITY ADDRESS

BY

VISCOUNT MORLEY, O.M.

CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF MANCHESTER

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## NOTE

THESE pages are a version, amplified and recast, of an Address delivered by the writer, as Chancellor of the University of Manchester, in the summer of 1912. The strict rules that limit the contents of a Bill in parliament by its Title, would be fatal to an academic address like this. I only hope that my Notes are not too dispersive to prevent some points of thought from being of use in the way of suggestion, interrogatory, and perhaps as spur to curiosity.

M.

# NOTES ON POLITICS AND HISTORY

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## I

Universities and political habit of mind.

When I had the pleasure of coming among you a few months ago, I offered some remarks upon the obvious truth that democracy in the discussions of the day means government working directly through public opinion; and upon the equally urgent importance of a body, like this University, making it one part of its office to help in forming those habits of mind and temper upon which, along with knowledge of the right facts, the soundness of opinion depends.

To-night I propose to harp upon the same string, and to say something about

politics and history. I intend a double subject with a single object. I need your indulgence, for of history I know too little, and of politics some of you may think I know too much, and know it wrong. Pretty manifest roots of mischief easily spoil both contemporary politician and historian; both the minister or the elector of to-day, and the interpreter of days long ago. Looseness of mind is one; narrowness of vision is another. Plenty of infirmities besides are left. You know the worst of them, at least by distant report — indolence, impatience, procrastination, incoherence, pugnacity. I include pugnacity among defects, for it is no vice of intellect if our first attitude towards new opinion is one of readiness and attentive response, rather than instantaneous combat; to give a

hearing, before rushing to controversial fire-arms. A receptive mind is after all no hindrance to firm love of truth. On the other hand life is short, and there are limits to patience with quackish fungoids. You have not, I would fain believe, forgotten the spirit of a passage from Spinoza that I quoted here last time: "When I applied my mind to politics, so that I might examine what belongs to politics, with the same precision of mind as we use for mathematics, I have taken my best pains not to laugh at the actions of mankind, not to groan over them, not to be angry with them, but to understand them." By understanding them, he says, he means looking at all the motives of human feeling, — love, hatred, envy, ambition, pity, — not as vices of human nature, but as

properties belonging to it, just as heat, cold, storm, thunder belong to air and sky.

Signs of the times.

So much to begin with — the mood and temper: then the application and occasion. Any reflective observer, if he likes, can sketch some of the signs of the times in rather formidable outline. Let us look at it. Political power is described as lying in the hands of a vast and mobile electorate, with scanty regard for tradition or history. What is history to me? asks the plain busy man. Democracy, they warn us, is going to insist on writing its own programme. The structure of executive organs and machinery is undergoing half-hidden but profound alterations. The two Houses of our Parliament are being fundamentally transformed before our eyes. The Cabinet,

keystone of the arch, in size and in prerogative is not altogether safe against invasion. The great wholesome system of party is said to be melting into groups and coalitions. The growth of special interests, each claiming for itself a representative Minister in the Cabinet, has turned it into a noun of multitude indeed, and a noun not wholly favourable to that concentrated deliberation which was possible when Pitt had first six, then seven colleagues, Peel twelve, and Gladstone fourteen. To-day we are a score.

Committee of Imperial Defence.

A body of professional experts is now united to a selected body of ministers, to shape conclusions in the sphere of military defence, and therefore of expenditure; and such conclusions, though nominally advisory or for information only, naturally carry a weight that can-

not but affect the judgment and responsibility of a Cabinet. The appearance, moreover, of a leader of Opposition in this important committee seems to point to the neutralization both of military and foreign affairs (for each of these must necessarily depend upon the other), and to their withdrawal from the field of party contention. This would not be the first instance in our history of a vast slow silent disguised transformation in the constitution of the empire, without either embodiment in any single instrument, or any coherent and systematic transaction. Everybody knows, though nobody has ever exactly comprehended, the famous plan of Sir William Temple in the time of Charles II. Ingenious observers may trace, if they like, a sort of return to Temple's scheme in what they take to

be the slow re-modelling of our cabinet system, turning it into a sort of supreme imperial senate, but always owing its existence to a majority of the House of Commons — a vital condition entirely alien to Temple's age and mind. Another important element cannot be left out of even the barest summary. Self-governing commonwealths over the seas are making initial claims for a direct voice in the control of imperial affairs. The most recent move in this direction — the adjustment of naval contribution — has not so far been decisive.

National atmosphere and character.

More than all this alteration in machinery, are signs of change in national atmosphere. These, we have good reason to hope, may be only superficial and transient, for nothing is more certain than that in a survey of the modern

world, national character is slowest of all things to alter in its roots. Meanwhile, we discover a shaken attitude towards law as law; a decline in reverence for institutions as institutions; a latter-day antinomianism. Even powerful lawyers use language that treats a statute as a cobweb; and sealed agreements by great industrial organizations, are sometimes no better than ropes of sand. Nor is the change peculiar to England. American citizens of a reflective turn sometimes tell us of the same thing even there. If we remember, for instance, that administration of law is the keystone of all civilized government, it is startling to hear American statesmen who have held posts of supreme responsibility, passionately denouncing the administration of criminal law as a

disgrace to their country, and declaring the English system of judges appointed for life to be better than their system of elected judges. Or else on the other hand they demand appeal to a popular referendum against decisions of State Courts on constitutional issues, and are for cashiering the judges who made them — in either case shattering the foundations of the judicial fabric. Weakened confidence in our parliament would be formidable, but confidence destroyed in courts of justice would be taking out the linch-pin. Yet it would not be at all true to say that sense of political curiosity, interest, and obligation has declined. The case is just the opposite. Political obligation as tested by the numbers who take part at elections is in fact stronger rather than weaker, and sense of social

duty, which is not by any means the same thing as political obligation, has vastly grown alike in strength and range.

May I, without peril, here add another engrossing element in the political landscape? You have all heard how, just before the revolutionary storm broke over France in 1789, Sieyès published one of the most effective pamphlets ever written: its title was this: "*What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been in politics until now? Nothing. What does it ask? To become something.*" A good critic of to-day warns us that behind the third estate, behind the fourth estate, a fifth estate has risen, with which we have to count. "Women who were nothing, and who rather claim to be everything, to-morrow are going to be something." [1]

[1] Faguet, *Prob. Pol.* xvi.

Some causes of social change.

People capable of serious rumination will ask themselves what is the precise connection, if any connection at all, between the embarrassing changes of the hour, and, say, five profound changes in our scheme of national life and thought within the last fifty years? Such changes are these. Predominant political power has been transferred from a landed and hereditary aristocracy and the middle class to the nation as a whole. A system of compulsory education has been spread over the length and breadth of the land. Old ecclesiastical pretensions have vanished, and a singular elasticity is working its way into the forms, symbols, and standards of theological creed. Science and the scientific spirit have, for the time at least, mounted into the thrones of literature and art. Finally,

the whole conception of the State has been enormously extended. The exertion of all the powers and duties of a State is every day more and more insistently demanded. One result of this last advance concerns that change in the cabinet system to which I have already referred, for it means extension of departmental labour for the minister, and this makes the task of miscellaneous deliberation all the more arduous or impossible.

Close observation the beginning of reflection.

Nothing is easier than to make a crisis out of this signal conjuncture of interesting, perplexing, and exciting circumstance. Still the long experience of our national history shows it safest, wisest, soundest, in respect of all English-speaking communities, to be in no hurry to believe that, in John Bunyan's pithy phrase, "passion will have all things now."

Let us pray to be delivered from exaggeration, and to have vouchsafed to us that cautious sense of proportion, which is one of the main differences between a wise man and a foolish. Above all, how well it would be for everybody, if you who have a share in the moulding of the future in your hands, would write on the tablets of your minds the words of a man who first brought scientific method effectively to bear on social problems. The present writer, said Malthus of himself, is in no temper to find plans for the future improvement of society visionary. "But he has not acquired that command over his understanding which would enable him to believe what he wishes, without evidence, or to refuse his assent to what might be unpleasing, when accompanied with evidence." This is the temper that

we may expect to see grow up and spread in universities.

Value of university ethos.

Our present case, as to social cause and effect, offers tempting material for high party dispute, and sectarian recrimination and reproach, but nothing is to be gained on that line here to-night. An important observer of our own day looks for progress to a social force, new in magnitude if not in kind, described by him as the modern alliance between pure science and industry.[1] How far this new force will go may be dubious, but whatever strength it has, must be centred in these great teaching corporations. They must be its main organs. It is their ethos, their inner genius, that must, apart from the instruction they provide, lead and sustain us in the march.

[1] *Decadence.* Sidgwick Memorial Lecture. By A. J. Balfour. 1908.

Universities have been boldly ranked by competent historians with trial by jury and parliaments, among leading institutions of the Middle Ages. At any rate in England the power of universities and the public schools that feed them, has been immeasurable in the working of other institutions. They have been main agents in moulding both our secular and ecclesiastical politics. They have worked too often for darkness as well as light. Too often and too long have they been the mirror of stolid prejudices and childish conventions; the appendages of old social form and institution, rather than great luminaries dispensing knowledge, and kindling that ardent love of new truth for which youth is the irrevocable season. Power of this high dimension is not likely to be missing in our new universities,

though its forms are undergoing rapid revolution. Well was it said, "*C'est toujours le beau monde qui gouverne le monde.*" That is still a great deal more true than people think, even in countries like our own where aristocratic polity has in large degree gone down. But the privileges of the fine world of social class must yield henceforth to the forces that shape temper, judgment, and range of public interest, in educational centres such as yours.

The infusion of their thought and temper is what will impart its colour to the general discussion. It will reduce the number of those who think they have opinions, when in truth they have not. Universities, besides imparting special knowledge, are meant for reason's refuge and its fortress. The standing enemies

of reason, in spite of new weapons, altered symbols, changing masks, are what they have always been everywhere. I will spare you the catalogue of man's infirmities, of which I said enough when I began. It is both pleasanter and sounder to turn our eyes the other way, to man's strength, and not his weakness — towards equity, candour, diligence, application, charity, disinterestedness for public ends, courage without presumption, and all the other rare things that are inscribed in epitaphs on men of whom kind friends thought well. Wide and stirring is the field.

There is no unkindness, and there is useful truth, especially under popular governments, in pressing people to realize the whole bearings of the commonplace, that time and mutations of political atmosphere are incessantly attaching a

different significance to the same ideas and the same words. We are so apt to go on with our manful battles as if the flags and banners and vehement catch-words all stood for old causes. This is only one side of all the changing aspects of the time. I ventured to speak of narrowness of vision. The vision would indeed be narrow, that overlooked the reaction on our own affairs of circumstances outside—the new map of Europe, the shifting balances of fighting strength, Hague tribunals, tariffs, the Panama Canal, strange currents racing in full blast through the rolling worlds of white men, black men, brown men, yellow men.

II

Ideals and realisation.

The most dogmatic agree that truth is prodigiously hard to find. Yet what

rouses intenser anger than balanced opinion? It would be the ruin of the morning paper. It takes fire out of conversation. It may destroy the chance of a seat in the Cabinet, and, if you are not adroit, may weary constituents. The reason is simple. For action, for getting things done, the balanced opinion is of little avail or no avail at all. "He that leaveth nothing to chance," said the shrewd Halifax, "will do few things ill, but he will do very few things." As King Solomon put it, "He that considereth the wind shall not sow, and he that looketh to the clouds shall not reap." Moderation is sometimes only a fine name for indecision. The partisan temperament is no gift in a judge, and it is well for everybody to see that most questions have two sides, though it is a pity in a practical

world never to be sure which side is right, and to remain as "a cake that is not turned." You even need the men of heroic stamp with whom "a hundred thousand facts do not prevail against one idea." Nations are lucky when the victorious idea happens to have at its back three or four facts that weigh more than the hundred thousand put together. Some well-trained observers find history abounding in volcanic outbreaks of fire and flame, seeming only to leave behind hardened lava and frozen mud. Only too true. Only too familiar is the exaggerated and mis-shapen rationalism that shuts out imagination, distrusts all sentiment, despises tradition, and makes short work alike of the past, and of anything like collective or united faith and belief in the present. But to be over-

impatient with what may prove by and bye to be fertilizing Nile floods, is pure foolishness. They will subside, and a harvest well worth saving remain for the hand of the reaper.

Generous illusion and the Manichean struggle.

Ardent spirits have common faults in an expectant age. We know them all. They are so apt to begin where they should end. Pierced by thought of the ills in the world around them, they are overwhelmed by a noble impatience to remove, to lessen, to abate. Before they have set sail, they insist that they already see some new planet swimming into their ken, they already touch the promised land. An abstract *a priori* notion, formed independently of experience, independently of evidence, is straightway clothed with all the sanctity of absolute principle. Generous aspiration, exalted

enthusiasm, is made to do duty for reasoned scrutiny. They seize every fact or circumstance that makes their way, they are blind to every other. Inflexible preconceptions hold the helm. They exaggerate. Their sense of proportion is bad.

If party politicians are with us, they will observe, that in this place to-night I am bound to carry political impartiality to the point of passion, and they will not quarrel with me for saying that such vices of political method as I have hinted at — the substitution of generous illusion for cool induction — are just as common among glowing conservatives as among glowing liberals. Nobody in any camp will quarrel with the view that one of the urgent needs of to-day is a constant attempt to systematize political thoughts,

and to bring ideals into closer touch with fact. There can be no reason why that should turn brave and hopeful men into narrow, dry, or cold-hearted. The French Revolution has not realized its ideals. But then no more has the Reformation. Even as to Christianity itself, one of the most famous sayings of the eighteenth century — that "Christianity had been tried and failed, the religion of Christ remained to be tried," — is not even now quite out of date. In a thousand forms, the Manichean struggle between Good and Evil, between Good and Better, persists. About one-third of the inhabitants of our planet are Christian, — the adherents of the Roman Communion being put at 240 millions, the Protestant Communions at 150, the Greek Church at 100 millions.

The Jews, only 10 millions, — lowest in number, but possessing a vast effective power of various kinds in the politics of Europe. The relation of creeds to new phases of social idealism must break into cardinal issues, and light may be thrown upon the interesting question what proportion of the ideas that men live with and live upon, are held open to discussion in their minds, and how many of them are inexorable and sacrosanct. There is good promise that the common temper of willingness to try all things, and hold fast that which is good, will prevail.[1]

Misuse of terms, a main root of confusion.

It will do us no harm to digest a sobering thought from Locke: "If any one shall well consider the errors and obscurity, the mistakes and confusion, that are

[1] For a remarkable consideration of Religion in respect of Politics, see Lord Hugh Cecil's little volume, *Conservatism* (Williams and Norgate, 1912).

spread in the world by an ill use of words, he will find some reason to doubt whether language, as it has been employed, has contributed more to the improvement or hindrance of knowledge among mankind." Dismal as this may be at any time, how especially perturbing to people with such questions before them, as we are called upon to face to-day. Now, if ever, what mistakes and confusion are likely to follow an ill use of political words, and of the ideas that words stand for. What would become of a lawyer in the Courts who argued his cases with the looseness in point and language, the disregard of apt precedents, the slack concatenation of premiss and conclusion, the readiness to take one authority for as good as another, — which even the best of us so often find good enough for

politics? Is there any other field where Bacon's hoary idols of Theatre, Tribe, Market Place, and Cave, keep such contented house together? Five-and-twenty centuries have passed since one great Greek historian, perhaps casting a stone at another, rebuked in famous words the ignorant carelessness of mankind. "People do not distinguish; without a test they take things from one another: even on things of their own day, not dulled in memory by time, Hellenes are apt to be all wrong. *So little pains will most men take in search for truth: so much more readily they turn to what comes first.*"[1]

An American illustration.

To these hints of mine an American newspaper supplied an apt illustration.

[1] Thuc. i. 20; οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ληθείας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἑτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.

The number of questions, says the writer, now before the American people, on which it is urgent that they should have an intelligent opinion, is staggering. Take one of the most intricate of them all, what to do with Trusts. How are the masses going to know the precise legal and financial effect of the decree of the court dissolving the Tobacco Trust? They see eminent lawyers radically differing. They hear politicians railing. Nobody can seriously argue that the intricacies of Trust repression and regulation can be mastered by "the wisdom of the people." What the people can do is to form clear and strong convictions upon the fundamental conceptions that underlie the whole question. A sound public opinion can be formed on the main questions, whether we should try to

maintain in trade and industry the possibility of effective competition, or whether combination and monopoly should be undertaken, controlled, and supervised by the State. Get these essentials settled, then legislative, executive, and tribunals can find proper and effective form. Such is an American case. It would be easy, though more delicate, for us to find illustrations quite as apt in the United Kingdom as in the United States.

**Easy words for hard quarrels.**

The ideas and words that seem simplest turn out most complex. If anybody doubts, ask him to try his hand, say on Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.[1] He will be very lucky if, besides being com-

[1] Any one who seeks to explore this all-important field, should not miss F. W. Maitland, *Collected Papers*, i. 1–161; nor Sir James Stephen's three little volumes, *Horæ Sabbaticæ* (1892), full of hard close thinking, needing answer and capable of answer.

plex, he does not find their contents and applications directly self-contradictory. Of liberty, we have been told on the best authority, there are two hundred definitions. Yet, said Lincoln in their war, "the world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. We assume the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labour; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labour."

Then men will not soon forget Cavour's memorable formula "A free Church in a free State." What could be simpler,

what more direct, what more pleasant and easy jingle to the politician's ear? Yet of what harsh and intractable discords was that theme the prelude? The erection of a kingdom of Italy with Rome for its capital, was too momentous an event to be comprised in one political formula. It is no hallucination to describe it as the most important fact in European history for two centuries,[1] that is to say since the Peace of Westphalia. One aspect of commanding significance these two supreme landmarks present in common. Each sets the seal upon a transmutation as memorable for States as Churches: from each of them, the system and relations between political authority and spiritual emerge with changed foun-

[1] *Le Droit public et l'Europe Moderne.* De la Guerronniere, i. 332.

dations and renovated ordering. The system of the middle age is over, though ponderous links of the broken chain still hang round the emancipated ruler's neck.

Religious Liberty.

The most living and familiar of all the phrases in the controversy of our times is Religious Liberty: in France and Italy a burning question; in Ireland, Scotland, and even England, by no means a mere handful of dead historic ashes. Familiar as it is, the designation covers entirely diverse meanings. Leo XIII. found two of them in liberty of conscience: one, liberty of the individual to follow God's commands; the other, freedom to prescribe the divine precepts at his own discretion. Sometimes religious liberty stands for unfettered freedom in uttering and advocating opinion on issues of theology, — its foundations as recorded

truth, its interpretations of binding doctrine, its consistency, or its complete and wholesale incompatibility, with accepted standards and methods in the ever-extending area of positive knowledge and intrepid criticism. Sometimes it designates the claim of a religious body to impose upon faithful and voluntary members, what rules as to marriage, education, congregation, and the rest, its commanding ecclesiastics may choose, with no regard either to surrounding social prepossessions, or to the convenience of the State. Is the principle of religious liberty violated when the police forbid a Catholic procession through the streets of Westminster? Or when a congregation of French monks or nuns is sent packing? Or when an English court of law, as happened only a few years

ago, pronounces null and void a bequest to a society holding opinions contrary to Christianity? What of all the strenuous laws and unflinching executive acts in both hemispheres, for a century and a half, against the dreaded Society of Jesus? Greeks and other people in the seventh and eighth centuries, in their struggle with imperial authority, were fond of using religious watchwords that were really inspired by political and racial resentments. And such malpractice has not even yet quitted highly civilized communities not so remote from us as is Stamboul. Still, we may fairly say that in our State at least, within a single generation, a law of tolerance — not indifference, not scepticism, not disbelief, but one of those deep, silent transformations that make history endur-

able — has really worked its way not merely into our statutes and courts of justice, but into manners, usage, and the common habits of men's minds.

Forms of Government.

In the vast field of questions connected with Forms of Government, terms in the commonest employment abound in confusion. Sir George Lewis, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1857, and the most widely learned man that ever held that office, wrote a little book on what he styled the use and abuse of political terms. He does not really carry things much further than the primitive debate of the seven Persian noblemen five centuries before Christ.[1] The book has little sap, but it puts useful posers as to the exact classification, for instance, of the varieties of republic and monarchy.

[1] Herodotus, iii.

It is democracy where a majority of adult males have direct legal influence in the formation of the sovereign body. It is aristocracy where this majority have no direct legal influence. Is democracy a system in which the many govern or, as Aristotle supposed, a system in which the poor govern? Is it enough to dispatch democracy as a system where the career is open to the talents? And so forth, with a general suggestion of loose and inapplicable terms being the links that chain men to unreasonable practices. As if in fact, our incurable trick of taking a word for a thing were not the root of half the mischiefs of the world. A new term has gained strong hold since Lewis's time, but Sociocracy, the hybrid name sometimes given to our still dubious accommodation between democratic

Sociocracy.

expansion and plutocracy, is not yet acclimatized. Our own famous ruling assembly has been called the mother of parliaments, and the congenial image justly stirs our national pride. Yet differences in power and the source of power between parent and progeny, almost surpass resemblances. Take the House of Commons itself. Even writers of the first rank speak of its doings, and temper, and prerogative during the war with the American Colonies, or the long war against Napoleon, as if the House of Commons during either of those two momentous episodes was the same as the House of Commons that rules over us to-day — that is to say was chosen by the popular voice and national acclamation, instead of being, as it was, the nominee of a handful of a privileged order.

Then Aristocracy in England has been too essentially political, — and for other reasons, — to stand out as pure caste. Even the vital caste-mark of refusing commensality has broken down. It is true that as a member of old standing in the House of Lords said to a novice just come up from the Commons, "You know, we are all like friends here," and in a social sense this may be true enough. But let me remind you that what competent observers justly describe as one of the greatest improvements in public affairs ever proposed by any government — the change from royal and patrician patronage in the Civil Service to open competition — was carried in a cabinet of fifteen, of which Mr. Gladstone said that no cabinet could have been more aristocratically composed: Aristocracy.

only one member of it did not belong to that class, and that was himself. The case is taken by his biographer as showing in how unique a degree that great man combined profound democratic instinct with the spirit of good government, — the instinct of popular equality with the scientific spirit of the enlightened administrator.

Monarchy and Republic.

In all the vocabularies and catechisms of government, no idea has fired such energy and devotion in the human breast, as the idolized name of Republic, unless, to be sure, it may be the name and the idea of Monarchy. In passionate enthusiasm, as well as in cogent force of practical reason, Legitimist and Republican have been many a time well matched. Yet how profoundly diverse in essence, record, and mechanism, the multiple

systems that are labelled by the common name of Republic. Cromwell was dictator rather than republican. Venice was of radically different type from Florence. The republic that emerged after the Swiss cantons had thrown off the yoke of Austria, was in form and foundation different from the Dutch system after the overthrow of Spain. The first French Republic was a very different structure from the second, and the second from the third, and so are they both from the United States of America. I need not speak of the republics where in South America Latin and Catholic civilization follows a strange and devious course, and where republic means no more as a form of government, than is meant by monarchy in the distracted Balkans.

Take the Legitimist, — a name in-

vented for the Bourbon line when the first Republic and first Empire were swept away at Vienna in 1815. If we are to understand by legitimate a government that has acquired possession and authority on the ground of acknowledged title through regular succession, treaties, or conquest recognized as legitimate, — what of the European monarchies of to-day satisfy legitimist standards? In England, as we all know, succession to the throne rests upon a revolution, — the result of one of those political expediencies that amount to a necessity, — though masters of reasoned eloquence, from Burke to Macaulay, have put upon it a saving face of continuous law and order. In Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, the sovereign wears a revolutionary crown.

Even the consecrated name of Public Opinion, — queen of the world, as it has been so chivalrously called — has many values. One constitutional writer in whom learning has been by no means fatal to wit — and neither law nor politics is without considerable points of humour — puts it that the opinion of Parliament is the opinion of yesterday, and the opinion of judges is that of the day before yesterday. That is, the judges go by precedent and old canons of interpretation, while Parliament makes laws, imposes taxes, regulates foreign relations, in response to movements outside. Public Opinion.

In arguing for or against an institution, who draws due distinctions between its formal and legal character, and its actual work in practice? Or makes allowance

for the spirit of those who carry it on? Or for the weight of its traditional associations? In politics is it the voice of the electorate? Are there any better grounds for regarding either a majority or a plurality of votes, than that it is a good working political rule? Does the rule work well enough in general practice, to make new expedients — Plébiscites, Referendums, and the rest — pieces of supererogation, calculated to shred away the concentrated force of a governing representative assembly? A very interesting writer of our own time[1] emphasizes the non-rational element in politics, — impulses, instinct, reaction. Mr. Graham Wallas insists that the empirical art of politics consists largely in the creation of opinion by the deliberate

[1] *Human Nature in Politics*, by Graham Wallas, 1908.

exploitation of non-conscious non-rational inference. This at least is true that empirical practitioners find it hard to forecast the decisive elements. The press is no safe barometer. In at least three remarkable parliamentary elections since 1874, the result has been an immense surprise to those who had regarded only the line of the most widely read journals in the most important areas: the journals went on one side, the great majority of electors voted the other. Lord Beaconsfield did not expect his sweeping repulse in 1880. Of Palmerston it was said by Clarendon that he mistook popular applause for real opinion. Nothing is so hard, either to reckon or to identify. The idealist is angry or despondent when he finds the public deaf. Literary satire likens popular indifference towards new

ideas to the dogs barking at a stranger. Or the satirist bethinks himself of the ass who prefers a bundle of hay to a dozen gold pieces. It would be easy to make a good case both for the two honest animals and for the public, and in truth the satire is idle. No doubt ripe judgments and sensibly trained minds are not always received with open arms. The hard and strenuous pre-occupations of life naturally first bespeak the common eye. But the ripe temper, if apt and patient, slowly soaks its way, and well-stamped coins find their currency. Representative government exists to-day in a hundred different forms, depending on a hundred differences in social state and history, and nobody claims for public opinion in all or any of them either sanctity or infallibility. But to make a mock of it,

is merely to quarrel with human life. We all know the shortcomings in political opinion and character — the fatal contentment with simple answers to complex questions; the readiness, as Hobbes put it, to turn against reason, if reason is against you; violent over-estimate of petty things; vehement agitation one day, reaction as vehement the other way the next; money freely laid on a flashing favourite this week, deep curses on what has proved the wrong horse the week after; haste; moral cowardice; futility. But if anybody supposes that these mischiefs are peculiar to parliaments or democracy, he must be strangely ill-read in the annals of military despotism, absolute personal power, centralized bureaucracy, exalted ceremonial courts.

III

Anniversary of Rousseau.

To-day[1] as it happens, is the anniversary of the birth of Rousseau a couple of hundred years ago. In the French Chamber, on a proposal last week to vote public money for its celebration, one side argued that it was absurd to magnify the father of anarchist theories, at a moment when police were shooting down anarchist bandits in the suburbs of Paris. The other side insisted that Rousseau was the precursor of modern conceptions of social justice, and achieved for all time decisive and persistent influence over French, German, Russian literature. A dozen books in political literature — Grotius, *On the Rights of War and Peace* (1625), for instance, and Adam Smith's

[1] July 12, 1912.

*Wealth of Nations* (1776), — rank in history as acts, not books. Whether a dozen or a hundred, the *Social Contract* assuredly was one. The *Institutions of the Christian Religion*, launched in Geneva two centuries before Rousseau, was another. But Calvin, the Protestant pontiff from France, was no theorist as Rousseau was. The rock on which he built his Church was his own unconquerable will and unflinching power to meet occasion. This it was, not merely doctrines and forms of theologic faith, that have made him one of the commanding forces in the annals of the world. Let us note in passing that our fashionable idolatry of great States cannot blind us to the cardinal fact that self-government, threatened with death when Protestantism appeared upon the stage,

was saved by three small communities so little imperial in scope and in ideals as Holland, Switzerland, and Scotland. Taking Rousseau and Calvin together, Geneva stands first of the three.

The test of effective mind is actuality.

Burke scourged Rousseau's name and his work with an energy only less savage than his onslaught in the same page upon Charles II. He rejoiced that Rousseau had none of the popularity here that followed him over the continent of Europe. Burke went on, as Wordsworth saw him, forewarning, denouncing, launching forth keen ridicule against all systems built on abstract right, proclaiming the majesty of Institutes and Laws hallowed by time, "with high disdain exploding upstart theory." Yet Maine, the most eminent English member of the Burkian school — I do not

forget Sir James Mackintosh — tells us that Rousseau, without learning, with few virtues, and with no strength of character, has nevertheless stamped himself ineffaceably on history by the force of a vivid imagination and a genuine love for his fellow men, for which much will always have to be forgiven him. It was Bentham who so well put it that if you want to win mankind, you must make them think you love them, and the best way to make them think you love them, is to love them in reality. Rousseau's idyll of the Savoyard Vicar that fascinated the sensibilities of Europe, and struck a new note in imagination and romance, came from the same brain and heart as the political projectiles that served the turn of Robespierre, and a host of greater and better men. So the storm

of a fresh world-battle opened. In essence it was not new: it was a re-adjustment to new occasion of thoughts and schemes that were very old. The names of Hobbes, Filmer, Sidney, Milton, Harrington, are enough to recall the controversies upon the roots of government and law, *jus naturæ*, *jus gentium*, and so forth, all over Europe, a century before. The historian of political philosophy takes us back to centuries earlier still. Tradition, custom, usage, convention, established institutions — History on one side, Law of Nature and Rights of Man on the other. The feud reached not politics only; it penetrated philosophy, art, letters, churches, education, in countless forms; for, we may be sure, the same aspects and influences that strike deep on politics, strike deep all round. Here is the stamp

of one of the great ages, whose alternation and succession in history mark its lodestars, and signalize its title to men's praise.

Man free-born.

You know the electrifying sentence of Rousseau's *Social Contract:* "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One supposes himself the master of others, who is none the less for that more of a slave than they are." We need take no pains in our later days of Heredity as one of the established laws of animal existence, to analyze the description of man as born free; and for that matter the idea was older and played its part in writers older and more respectable than Rousseau. It is nearer the mark, so far at any rate as the civilized European of to-day is concerned, to say that he is born two thousand years old. That is what history means to our

plain man, if he had time and patience to meditate beyond the hour. And it is worth observing as we pass the point of freedom, that Rousseau himself insisted that everybody should pledge himself to belief in the existence of an omnipotent and beneficent divinity, in a life to come where the just should be very happy, and the wicked very miserable. To these and other articles, he said, every citizen should adhere, not as dogmas of religion, but as sentiments of sociability. If he broke away from them, a man should be punished by exile or death, and rationalistic heads were actually struck off in 1794, strictly and avowedly on Rousseau's principle, just as Servetus perished in flames that Calvin kindled, and Sir Thomas More's head was cut off by King Henry VIII.

If, however, the critic lets inconsistency detain him, he is lost. Only let us add as a pendant to Rousseau's dictum, a no less bold and much truer dictum, that man is born intolerant, and of all ideas toleration would seem to be in the general mind the very latest.

The sower's fortune and the soil.

It is easy for the judicious observer of a later day to riddle a book like the *Social Contract* with shot and shell of logic, doctrine, figures, history; just as it was easy for Dr. Johnson to scold Gray's *Elegy*, but none the less the poem remained an eternal delight and solace for the hearts of wearied men. More than one distinguished master of political and legal philosophy in our own day and generation has subjected it to searching analysis, of weight and significance.[1]

[1] *E.g.* Bosanquet's *Philosophical Theory of the State*, 1899.

But what matters more than logic, or dialectic cut-and-thrust, is history, — relations of present to past, leading antecedents, external forces, incidents, and the long tale of consummating circumstance. How often do miscalculations in the statesman, like narrowness and blunder in the historian, spring from neglect of the pregnant and illuminating truth that deeper than men's opinions are the sentiment and circumstances by which opinion is predetermined. "What it is important for us to know with respect to our own age, or every age, is *not its peculiar opinions, but the complex elements of that moral feeling and character, in which as in their congenial soil opinions grow.*" [1] In these words you have a truth, abounding in enrichment, power, insight,

[1] Mark Pattison's *Essays*, i. 264.

and self-collection, for every patient student of mankind, — such a student as in our better hours of the diviner mind it is the business of us all to try to be.

The power of a political book, then, depends on aptness for occasion as occasions emerge. "What wonderful things are events," cries somebody in one of Disraeli's novels; "the least are of greater importance than the most sublime and comprehensive speculations!" Too widely and fantastically said for cool philosophy, no doubt; yet a fertile truth for critics. Crop depends on soil as well as seed. It is not abstract or absolute strength in argument or conclusion, but the fact, half-accident, of its happening to supply an exciting, impressive, persuasive, attack or defence, or some set of formulæ that the passion,

need, or curiosity of the hour demands. Books, doctrines, ideas have been compared to the flowers in a garden. 'Tis not always the best argument that prevails, and the gardener wins the prize who chooses his season right. How much of their time do even good writers pass in minting coin that has no currency. And in passing from our glorious dome of printed books in the British Museum, to the sepulchral monuments in another department, we may sometimes think that in vitality there is not much to choose between books that once shook the world, and the mummies of Egyptian kings. No piece of literature ever had more instant and wide-reaching power than Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* (1802). As an argumentative apology it is counted worthless even by

The event decides.

those who most welcome its effect. A friend told him that a picturesque stroke of memory from his travels, a passionate phrase, a fine thought, would win him more readers than a mountain of Benedictine erudition. He took the hint, and his historic knowledge is little better than decoration. The Frenchmen who thought seriously about the genius of Christianity, would have found more of what they wanted in half-a-dozen sermons of Bossuet or half-a-dozen pages of Pascal, not to name Augustine or the *Imitatio*, than in all that was to be found in the genius of Chateaubriand. But then as it happened Bonaparte had just made his Concordat with Pope Pius; he had played his part in solemn pomp at Notre Dame, once more formally associating religion with the State; he had

signed the peace with England at Amiens; a rainbow for the moment shone on storm-driven skies and the dark tribulations of men. No book was ever happier in its time, but to neither book nor influence could there be allotted length of days.

As with books, so with principles. Men, whether as bodies or individuals, pick out as much from a principle and its plainer corollaries, as convenience and their purpose needs. The possible limitations of logical inference are widened or narrowed or thrust aside pointblank, just as actual necessity dictates. The best syllogism is swept down by trumpet-blasts of Public Safety, Social Order, and other fair names for a Reign of Terror. A learned American judge found three great instruments in human history — the Ten Command-

**Three great documents in history.**

ments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Declaration of American Independence. This was perhaps no more than a flash of *obiter dictum*, and undoubtedly the bench exposed surface to a telling cross-examination. Yet after all Mount Sinai, the Mount of Olives, and State-House Yard in Philadelphia hold commanding stations in the courses of the sun. What we have to realize is the effulgence with which hopeful words, glittering ideas, fervid exhortations, and reforming instruments, burst upon communities oppressed by wrong, sunk and sodden in care, fired by passions of religion, race, liberty, property — those eternal fields of mortal struggle. Nothing is easier than to expose fallacies in the Declaration of Independence. The point is that, as an American historian

records with truth, it was "the genuine effusion of the soul of the country at the time."

Yet what a sound instinct for politics addressed to Englishmen of the stamp of the American Colonists, inspired Thomas Paine when he fired the revolutionary train by the most influential political piece that ever was composed, and called it by the wholesome, persuasive, and well-justified name of *Common Sense*. Quarrels about the best form of government, the balance of orders in the State, even natural rights, were comparatively old stories. Men are wont to use so much of such large oracular deliverances as the moment asks. Moral issues, as if almost by accident, suddenly take fire and set a community in a blaze. Four score and

Oracles accepted for the hour.

seven years passed, before a nobler President than Jefferson was able to bring his country round to his faith, that if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. Thus it is not abstract books that thrive in the day of trouble on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. Who cares to criticise the words in the famous Gettysburg speech about a nation "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"? But it was, as Burke said, not on abstract politics, but on the point of taxes, that the ablest pens and most eloquent tongues have been exercised, the stoutest spirits have acted and suffered. They took infinite pains to set up as a fundamental principle that in all monarchies the people must in effect themselves mediately or immediately possess the

power of granting their own money, or no shadow of liberty could subsist.[1] Not that rates and taxes are everything, or the taxgatherer the worst of our enemies. Of this, the most powerful example was Burke himself. After his splendid pieces on the contest with the American colonies, which I still submit to you as the profoundest manual of civil wisdom that our greatest literature possesses, the storm that the colonial victory had helped to gather, broke violently over monarchical France. Burke, with marvellous prescience, divined in detail the havoc that would follow; he became an oracle of the emigrant French nobles on the Rhine, and inspirer of the cogent pamphleteers like Gentz, who served or led Metternich at

[1] *Speech on Conciliation*, March 22, 1775.

Vienna. Not unjust rates and taxes, but the overthrow of all the high historic common-places fired the *Reflections*, and the *Regicide Peace*. All the reactionary forces of Europe found the voice they needed. Only, in seeking cause and effect, let us not confuse the voice with the force. Lamartine's story of the Girondins on the eve of 1848, Thiers' story of the first empire on the eve of the second, Mrs. Stowe's picture of slavery, are all books that suffused reason with passion, and turned passion into tumult, but already in each case the train was laid.

IV

Survival of the fittest.

Especially easy is it in the present state of our own country and the world for the most rudimentary of political observers to realize how possible it is, — nay,

how inevitable,—for tremendous political consequences to flow from books and speculations that seem to have nothing to do with politics. Who can measure the influence on our contemporary policies of Darwin and the other literature of Survival of the Fittest; and not only on practical politics, but its decisive contributory influence upon active and powerful schools of written history? It is no mere literary whim to count Darwin and the prestige of Prince Bismarck, as twin factors in the change of public temper from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. On the other hand, we should not forget how this passing change on the great theatre of states and government from a silver to a bronze age, has been accompanied by the spread, on a less resounding stage, of an intenser humanity

towards children, animals, victims of cruel disease, men in prisons, black men slaving in African jungles, and all else in need of pity, succour, and common human-heartedness. It has not all been blood and iron, nor has the rigour of political or social logic prevailed unqualified. So complex, subtle, and impenetrable, are the filaments that secretly bind men's thoughts and moods together.

The ruler as happy accident.

As with books and principles, so with famous actors on the historic stage. When Victor Hugo returned from exile some forty years ago, even competent men who did not much admire either him or his art, felt and admitted that one whose person was circled by the enthusiasm of three generations, must be possessed of qualities worthy of exalta-

tion and honour. Him, they said, who knows how to awaken the noblest feelings and impulses in men's breasts, whatever he may be besides, — it is well that we should honour; he is the hearth at which the soul of the country is kindled and kept alive. This diffusion of warm, lofty, and stimulating interests may be better worth the critic's attention than his book's specific content. Hugo's glory was due as much to the politician as to the poet, and that was the secret of an immense renown, only to be compared with Voltaire's; with both, the pen was sword.

What does your hero stand for?

It was said to a great English statesman of our day, "You have so lived and wrought as to keep the soul alive in England." This is something, after all, apart from the clauses of his Bills. It is a

something that may be almost as good as everything. To leave out or lessen personality would be to turn the record of social development into a void. The genius of Comte produced a reasoned list of the heroes and benefactors of mankind, of which it has been justly said by the most eminent opponent of Comte's constructive system, that a more comprehensive and catholic sympathy and reverence towards every kind of service to mankind is not to be met with in any other thinker.[1] A calendar without Luther, Calvin, or Napoleon needs explanation, but this was founded on his own elaborated and peculiar estimate of positive contribution to the well-being of

[1] The list is to be found in admirable form in the volume edited by Mr. Frederic Harrison, *The New Calendar of Great Men, Biographies of the 558 Worthies of all Ages and Nations in the Positivist Calendar.* (Macmillan, 1902.)

human society. Each is connected in place and work with the other. That is a very different thing from the adoration of cloud-compelling giants. It is very different, too, from that attachment to the name and person of a teacher and inspirer, which is one of the most beautiful of all traits in human character. Select them as you will, in whatever realm of thought, action, or creation, whether from five hundred or five, the first question, and in one sense the last, is, What does your hero personify? Nothing, we may be sure, is more fatal than turning history into idolatry. The hero-worship that Carlyle's wayward genius made so popular in our generation, too easily alike in history and in politics, falsifies perspective. Unity of ideas and interests, it is true, in a great man of

lofty plan and power of action, affect our imagination with something of the symmetry and attraction of the grandest art — drama, epic, symphony, the figures in the Medicean chapel, the Sistine frescoes. But the standards of art are bad guides in choosing political heroes. Of Napoleon it was said by one who knew, that he was all imagination: he created an imaginary Spain, an imaginary England, an imaginary Catholicism, imaginary finance, and imaginary France. And Carlyle in time created an imaginary Napoleon for hero-worship.

"Fortuitous variation" in history.

Unwelcome as it must be to many a deep prepossession, we may as well realize that the doctrine of "fortuitous variation," in which speculation finds the key to new species, has bearings beyond biology. The commanding man

in a momentous day seems only to be the last accident in a series; the unaccountable possessor of skill, talent, genius, will, vision, fitted to create or to control emergencies, or to make revolutions in both the machinery and commodities of life. "After all," said Alexander I. of Russia to Madame de Stael, "I am only a happy accident." Military history shows in a hundred cases some odd turn of chance, fortune, wind and weather, unforeseen and unforeseeable, on a given day deciding battle or campaign. The greatest generals have been first to own the blind jeopardies of their game, the hazards when men play with the iron dice of war. Last accident or first, — statesman, captain, thinker, inventor, — the precipitating agent appears fortuitous; comet, not great fixed star — the acci-

dent of a peculiar individuality coinciding with opportunity or demand.

If any one should be scandalized by the proposition that the course of history can be deflected by an accident, or should find in it an impious flavour, we should remember that both devout churchmen and deep statesmen, the loftiest champions of adherence to the profoundest pieties of life and time, have been the first and most constant to enlarge upon the impenetrable mysteriousness that hangs about the origin, the course, the working of human societies and their governing institutions. When the Russian Czar, a mystic of the purest water, called himself an accident, he meant no more than a mystery, a power of inscrutable source. Why should we be more shocked at the fortuitous in

affairs of government, than in the appearance of the Bachs and Beethovens in music, or Newton, or Watt, or any other of the originating luminaries in art, or science, or productive invention?

The Historic Method.

Truly has it been said of the historic method, that among other of its vast influences, it reduces the element of individual accident to its due proportions; it conceives of national character and national circumstances as the creative forces that they are. An ironical lawyer assures us that it would be better to be convicted of petty larceny than to be found wanting in "historic-mindedness." What is the historic method? Its sway is now universal in the field of social judgment and investigation. It warns us that we cannot explain or understand, without allowing for origins and

the genetical side of the agents and conditions with which we have all to deal. It substitutes for dogmas deduced from abstract regions, search for two things. The first, the correlation of leading facts and social ideas with one another in a given community at a given time. The second, the evolution of order succeeding to order in common beliefs, tastes, customs, diffusion of wealth, laws, and all the arts of life. Stripped of formality, this only expands the familiar truth that laws and institutions are not made but grow, and what is true of them is true of ideas, language, manners, which are in effect their source and touchstone.

It is easy to see that the ascendancy of the historic method has its drawbacks. Study of all the successive stages in beliefs, institutions, laws, forms of art,

only too soon grows into a substitute for direct criticism of all these things upon their merits and in themselves. Inquiry what the event actually was, vital and indispensable as that of course must be, and what its significance and interpretation, becomes secondary to inquiry how it came about. Too exclusive attention to dynamic aspects, weakens the energetic duties of the static. More than one school thus deem the predominance of historic-mindedness excessive. It means, they truly say, in its very essence, veto of the absolute, persistent substitution of the relative. Your method is non-moral, like any other scientific instrument. So is Nature in one sense, red in tooth and claw, only careful for survival of the strongest. There is no more conscience

in your comparative history, than there is in comparative anatomy. You arrange ideals in classes and series, but a classified ideal loses its vital spark and halo. Every page abounds in ironies. Even figures of high mark turn out political somnambulists. Talk of "eternal political truths," or "first principles of government," has no meaning. Stated summarily, is not your history one prolonged "becoming" (*fieri*, *werden*), an endless sequence of action, reaction, generation, destruction, renovation, "a tale of sound and fury signifying nothing." All is flux, said Heraclitus long centuries ago; no man goes twice down the same stream; new waters are in constant flow; they run down, they gather again; all is overflow and fall. Such argument as this, I know, may be hard pressed,

and it is in truth a protest for the absolute that cannot be spared to many active causes. But that relative tests and standards are the keys both to real knowledge of history, and to fair measure of its actors, is a doctrine not likely to lose its hold.

Politics as science.

To-night is not the time for discussing whether there is such a thing as political science. I need not try, for the work has been incomparably well done for our purposes in Sir Frederick Pollock's short volume on the *History of the Science of Politics*. Is there any true analogy between the body politic and the body natural; are the methods and processes of politics to be brought within sight of the methods and processes of biology? The politician may borrow phrases from the biologist, and talk of embryos, germs,

organisms, but surely those are right who insist that we have not come near to the definite creation of an inductive political science.[1] That is certainly no reason why the politician should not reason, nor why the historian should not explore, with the methodical energy, caution, conscience, candour, and determined love of truth, that marked Darwin and the heroes of the natural sciences.

Political science suffers from the same defect as political economy in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. There is a strange rarefaction in its atmosphere. The abstract political man wears the same artificial character as the abstract man of the economist. He was usually supposed by the French thinker of Voltaire's day to dwell in China or Persia,

[1] Maitland, *Collected Papers*, iii. 288.

or any other chosen land of which, as it actually was, they knew nothing; any more than they knew of Canada when they ridiculed the war between England and France as a struggle for thousands of square miles of perpetual snow. We know better now, but the standards of human motive are still applied in arbitrary fashion to what is distant in time or place. Ethical considerations pass for so much ornament. Matters are too much confined to description of political mechanics, without regard to all the varieties of social fuel on which the driving force depends. The changing growth of new opinion, the effectiveness of political institutions in giving expression to new opinion, are treated as secondary, or not treated at all. The lines laid down by Professor Dicey, in

his book on the relation between law and opinion in the nineteenth century, deserve to be followed, and they are sure to be. The science so conceived will realize that the value of political forms is to be measured by what they do. They must express and answer the mind and purposes of a State, in their amplest bearings. I hope all this is not ungrateful to a group of writers in this country, who in the last few years have filled a really important bookshelf in any library pretending to be on the highest level in this truly important sphere — with Green, Pollock, Dicey, Hobhouse, Bosanquet, Wallas, among them. Let nobody suppose that speculations as to the State and its various relations to the Individual are immaterial. It is held that the attempts of certain French teachers to

present German theories of the State in French dress, are directly responsible for Syndicalism in France.

Politics and law.

Politics, in the sense that I am suggesting, are different from law, because law tends to stereotype thought by forcing it into fixed categories, but political science, rightly handled, is for ever reopening these categories, to examine how they answer to contemporary facts. Political science is wider than law, because its work may be said to begin where law ends. It is less wide than sociology, because it starts from the assumption of the State with all its rights, powers, and duties.

V

A good German word.

Germans have in *Weltanschauung* a word for which I know of no English equivalent. The French find no easier

than do we, to convey it in a single word or even in a free circumlocution. It comes of the questions that haunt all ages, that survive all philosophies, that defy continuous generations of chartered soothsayers, that mock rising and sinking schools alike. Our literature possesses at least one poetic presentation of its spirit, in the two or three pages of inspiring prose that are the proem to George Eliot's *Romola*. Technically meaning a conception of the universe, *Weltanschauung* covers a man's outlook upon the world and time and human destinies; the mental summary of experience, knowledge, duty, affections to his fellows; relations to mysterious Force and Will, call it Providence, Moira, Fate, or by what name we choose, invisible but supreme. Such an outlook on the world

and its meanings, varies with each historic age, and marks it for what it is. This is what, if we seek the roots of social existence, distinguishes one period of civilization from another. Men in general are but vaguely conscious of *Weltanschauung*. For them, the World, in this wide comprehension of that commonest and most fluid of all our daily words, is no object of their thoughts. Yet all the time in some established creed, consecrated form, or iron chain of silent habit, this is what fixes vision, moulds judgment, inspires purpose, limits acts, gives its shades, colour, and texture to common language. Even for superior natures, narrow are the windows of the mind; no wide champaign, but narrow and restricted are the confines of our landscape.

Range of historic landscape.

History, in the great conception of it, has often been compared to a mountain chain seen far off in a clear sky, where the peaks seem linked to one another towards the higher crest of the group. An ingenious and learned writer the other day amplified this famous image, by speaking of a set of volcanic islands heaving themselves out of the sea, at such angles and distances that only to the eye of a bird, and not to a sailor cruising among them, would they appear as the heights of one and the same submerged range. The sailor is the politician. The historian, without prejudice to monographic exploration in intervening valleys and ascending slopes, will covet the vision of the bird.

According to an instructive living scholar, here we come upon the great

contrast between ancient history and modern. For right comprehension of Thucydides, he says, "the fundamental conception which all our thought about the world implies, must be banished — the conception, namely, that the whole course of events of every kind, human or non-human, is one enormous concatenation of causes and effects stretching forward and back into infinite time, and spreading outwards over immeasurable space. The world on which the Greek looked out, presented no such spectacle as this. Human affairs — the subject-matter of history — were not to him a single strand in the illimitable web of natural evolution; their course was shaped solely by one or both of two factors: immediate human motives, and the will of gods and spirits, of Fortune or

of Fate."[1] All this is just as true of great political historians like Machiavel and Guicciardini; they looked out upon the Europe of the fifteenth century from the walls of Florence with Livy, Tacitus, Sallust, for their only models. They had the experience of intelligent travel, no doubt, and that is the best of substitutes for patterns of written history. Still the mighty commander of a later age, himself Italian in stock, declared that Machiavelli wrote about battles as a blind man might write about colours.

So we might proceed through the "enormous concatenation" of historical names and sweeping change, that was never conceived nor comprehensible until it came to pass. Think, for example,

[1] *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, by F. M. Cornford (1907), pp. 66–68.

of the strange new spectacle of world and life that opened to men's minds and shaped their days, after the spiritual struggle between Catholic and Protestant confessions. Heresies had been abundant during the Ages of Faith, but wide disturbance of simple unquestioning acceptance had been rare and superficial. The protracted battle over the authority of Rome, over toleration, over church government by bishops, over rite and symbol, had been fought out. The rival creeds identified themselves with political forces, and had become definite and commanding ingredients in organized States. Only then did the purple vision of human societies in western Europe, united by a universal faith, begin to fade. The standing conflict that henceforth divided Christianity, and divided and

subdivided Protestantism itself, by the mere fact of its existence as a conflict, apart from its merits and contents, extended, diverted, transformed the outlook. Old worlds and systems disappear, new arise, still men live but in a corner of their own.

The day of specialization.

The temper of our present time is adverse to generalization. Harnack says that in 1700 the most universal or encyclopædic mind was Leibnitz, and in 1800 it was Goethe. I suppose Leonardo da Vinci for 1500, and nobody would dispute that in 1600 it was Bacon — the greatest intellect that ever combined power in thought with responsible practice in affairs of state. Court affairs at Weimar were little more than playground politics. To whom would competent authorities give the palm in 1900? If

we are slow to answer, the reason is that advance of specialization over the whole field of knowledge has made the encyclopædic mind an anachronism. The day of the circumnavigator is over — the men who strive to round the whole sphere of mind, to complete the circuit of thought and knowledge, and to touch at all the ports. We may find comfort in the truth that though excess of specialization is bad, to make sciolism into a system is worse. In reading history it is our common fault to take too short measure of the event, to mistake some early scene in the play as if it were the fifth act, and so conceive the plot all amiss. The event is only comprehended in its fullest dimensions, and for that the historic recorder, like or unlike the actor before him, needs insight and

imagination. French Revolution from Fall of the Bastille to Waterloo; English Revolution from Eliot, Pym, Hampden, Oliver, to Naseby, and from Naseby to William and Mary; American Union from the Philadelphia State House in 1776, to the Appomattox Court House in 1865; Democratic Ordering in England from the Reform Act of 1832 to the Parliament Act in 1911; Ireland from the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics in 1793 — to some date still uncertain. How desperately chimerical would the end of all these immense transactions have seemed to men who across long tracts of time had started them. They are all political; but the same observation would be just as true of the world's march in the sphere of ideas, methods, moral standards, religious creeds.

From tapestries to serge.

All agree that we have no business to seek more from the past than the very past itself. Nobody disputes with Cicero when he asks, "Who does not know that it is the first law of history, not to dare a word that is false? Next not to shrink from a word that is true. No partiality, no grudge."[1] Though nobody disputes the obvious answers, have a majority of historical practitioners complied? To-day taste and fashion have for a season turned away from the imposing tapestries of the literary historian, in favour of the drab serge of research among diplomatic archives, parish registers, private muniments, and everything else so long as it is not print. As Acton put it, the great historian now takes his meals in the kitchen. Even here we are not quite

[1] *De Orat.* ii. 15.

at our ease. Bismarck, reading a book of superior calibre, once came upon a portrait of an eminent personage whom he had known well. Such a man as is described here, he cried, never existed; and he went on in graphic strokes to paint the sitter as he had actually found him. "It is not in diplomatic materials, but in their life of every day that you come to know men." So does a singularly good judge warn us of the perils of archivial research. Nor can we forget the lament of the most learned and laborious of all English historians of our time. "I am beginning to think," said Freeman, "that there is not, and never was any such thing as truth in the world. At least I don't believe that any two people ever give exactly the same account of anything, even when they have

seen it with their own eyes, except when they copy from one another."[1] This is to bring some support for Goethe, that "the only form of truth is poetry." The plethora of printed books, moreover, has troubles of its own; it is consolatory to find an indefatigable historic worker in Oxford to-day, allowing for the weakness of the flesh, and protesting that bibliographies are sometimes so enormous as to be rather a nuisance than a help.

Unity of history.

The unity of history is now orthodox doctrine, though accepted, as orthodox doctrines sometimes are, in various senses. Freeman protested with almost tiresome iteration against division between ancient history and modern, and summed up in the heroic assurance that history deals not with the rivalry, "but the brother-

[1] *Life and Letters*, i. 238.

hood of all periods and all subjects, of all nations and languages, at least within the pale of Aryan Europe." Acton put it that "History derives its best virtue from regions beyond the sphere of State." Mr. Gooch, a younger student, says more fully: "No presentation of history can be adequate which neglects the growths of the religious consciousness, of literature, of the moral and physical sciences, of art, of scholarship, of social life." A third view is that profitable knowledge of history consists less in remembering events or characters of statesmen, than in knowing what men were like in bygone days, their aims, hopes, pleasures, beliefs, and how they thought and felt. There can be little doubt that this would best hit the common taste. Treitschke will not have it so. The farther a man

places himself away from the State, as he maintains, the farther he goes from historic life. To bring descriptions of the soul of a people into history, is to deal with last year's snow. Who, he asks, does not feel *Culturgeschichte* imperfect and unsatisfying, even when handled by a master? Even in Burckhardt's famous book on the Italian Renaissance, who does not feel a want, the want of active personalities? History, as Treitschke contends, is first of all the presentation of *res gestae*, and of active statesmen. The essential things in the statesman are strength of will, courage, massive ambition, passionate joy in the result.

It needs no wizard to see how such doctrine as this lends a hand to the sinister school of political historians, who

insist that the event is its own justification. Force and Right are one. Fact and reason, they contend, are and must be one and the same: the real and the rational are identic, and it is waste of time to labour differences between them. The disciples are thus led on to that exaltation of the State, which stands for force, into supreme pre-eminence as master-conception in men's minds and habits. Of this strong meat, you will let me say something later.

Churches as political realities.

I have just quoted words about religious consciousness, and regions beyond the sphere of State. How constantly have the immense phenomena of churches, Catholic and Protestant, so imposing and so penetrating, made the gravest chapter in the history of States. As if Churches were not political realities.

As if the Council of Constance in the fifteenth century, the Council of Trent in the sixteenth, the Assembly of Divines in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster during the civil wars, the Four Declarations of the French clergy in 1682, — with all the array of pontiffs, church princes, saints, doctors, congregations, presbyteries, preachers, friars, inquisitors, missioners, creeds, symbols, bulls, canon laws, catechisms, — were not in truth the very essence and mainspring of the vast and subtle political commotions that for age after age followed in their perpetual train. Is it mere distortion to say that "hardly a more momentous resolution can be found in history" than the decision at Nicæa in the fourth century?[1] If it be right to

[1] Gwatkin's *Studies of Arianism*, 43.

judge that no false system ever struck more directly at the very life of Christianity than Arianism, then the proscription of Arius and the triumph of Athanasius was an infinitely more potent thing in the history of Western mankind, than the fall of the Bastille and all the principles of either French or American Revolution.

It may, if anybody likes to have it so, be a good distinction that Force is the principle of the State, while the life and principle of a Church is Belief. For that matter both Church and State rest alike upon a shifting Tertium Quid of Authority, — say, an infallible Pope or an impregnable Book. The political affinities of religious and ecclesiastic creeds offer to the historic student some of his standing puzzles. How comes it, for example,

that the fatalism implied in Calvinistic Protestantism has been the nurse of some of the most strenuous, active, energetic, and independent natures in political history? There is many another case of national temper and outward circumstance bearing down the most stringent of logical arguments.

Political paradox.

Our own day offers a singular kaleidoscope. Men thought it a crushing scandal in the sixteenth century when Francis I. was suspected of making terms for himself with the arch enemy of Christian mankind, the Khalif of Turkey. Richelieu, one of the half-dozen sovereign names in the European record, systematically worked with English and Dutch against popish Spain for the same reason that made him relentless against his own Huguenots, namely, that they were the

foes of monarchical unity in France. The paradox is not absent in our own time. We see Roman Catholic Austro-Hungary the pledged confederate of what we are assured by her own oracles is Protestant Prussia. One-third of Prussia, to be sure, is Catholic, but Catholicism in standing contact with Protestant culture and liberalized institutions, as the American Union and our own Quebec are enough to show, is not like the same communion in Latin systems. Then the Sovereign who is head of the Church of England, is the ally of non-Christian Japan. The King-Emperor of India — the first European ruler who has ever put on the crown in Asia — is neutral and indifferent to the faiths and nearly all the old consecrated practices of the myriads of Hindus,

Mahommedans, Parsees. Politics are admittedly as if from the necessity of the thing, or privately for the sake of decency, supreme; and, it may be, whether men wish the process well or ill, such events do more to dissolve dogma and sap its hold, than any number of infidel books.

**Religion as cause and pretext.**

Sympathy, again, in principles of government and forms of government, is treated as no more to the point in settling the friendship of States, than sympathy in theology. The balance of power is supposed just now in the diplomatic chanceries to be maintained in Europe, by firm co-operation between a secularized Republic in France, and an absolutist Monarchy that is half theocracy in Russia. Ecclesiastical historians themselves have taught us how constantly church machinery has been used as a

source of power for the statesman's objects. They point to the war against the Albigensians as having for its real purpose the strengthening of French monarchy; the persecutions in Bohemia, as designed to fortify German dominion over the Czechs; the Spanish Inquisition, as set up and worked to overcome the disunion of race and history, for the sake of the Spanish monarchy. In these and an untold host of other cases the State was Force, and Belief was not the only point. If we must quantify, it has been said of the long religious wars in France, that in one-fifth of them religion was the cause, in four-fifths it was only the pretext. To search for the secular politician behind an army of spiritual crusaders is no cynicism. The enthusiasm, no doubt, is the more attrac-

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tive and exciting to reflective minds. Yet policy, hidden or avowed, may be a master-key.

History and the event.

According to some scientific historians[1] with a right to speak, history does not solve questions; it teaches us to examine. We often hear that our understanding of history is spoiled by knowledge of the event. A great event, they say, is seldom fully understood by those who worked for it. Our vision is surer about the past; there we have the whole; we see the beginning and the end; we distinguish essential from accessory; time foreshortens. To contemporaries events are confused, obscured by passing accidents, mixed with all sorts of foreign elements. Even men of the compass of

[1] For instance, Fustel de Coulanges, *Questions Historiques*, Preface (1893).

Cæsar, William the Silent, Cromwell, Chatham, pursued resolute general aims, subject only like all men's aims to the uncounted traverses of fortune, and to "leadings" that were half out of sight. Both contemporaries and historians, more often than they suppose, miss a vital point, because they do not know the intuitive instinct that often goes farther in the statesman's mind than deliberate analysis or argument. A visitor of Bismarck's once reminded him that Schopenhauer used to sit with him at dinner every day in the hotel at Frankfurt. "No, I had no business with him, I had neither time nor inclination for philosophy," said Bismarck, "and I know nothing of Schopenhauer's system." It was summarily explained to him as vesting the primacy of the will in self-con-

sciousness. "I daresay that may be all right," he said; "for myself at least, I have often noticed that my will had decided, before my thinking was finished."[1] Improvisation has far more to do in politics than historians or other people think.

**Dubious value of historic parallels.**

History's direct lessons are few, its specific morals rare. To say this is not to disparage the grand inspiration that present may draw from past, or the priceless value of old examples of lofty public deeds and magnanimous men. Plutarch's *Lives*, parallels and all, are the master proof, one of the too few books that can never be out of date. Heine said that when he read Plutarch, he felt a vehement impulse instantly to take post-horses for Berlin, and turn a hero.

[1] *Lebenserinnerungen von Julius v. Eckhardt*, ii. 122–3.

This, however, is a very different question. It is to working statesmen that parallels may easily be a snare, and ludicrous misapplications from Greece and Rome inspired some of the worst aberrations both of the French Revolution and of the Empire. The Old Testament was often made to play the same part in our own Rebellion. They are convenient to the politician. A plausible parallel makes him feel surer of his ground. It is as refreshing as a broad reflective digression in a close narrative. The French Revolution is down to this day a favourite armoury for parallels, predictions, warnings, even nicknames; and a harmless English politician finds himself labelled Jacobin or Girondin, though he really has no more in common with the Frenchman than he has with

Adam or Noah. We may often think of Napoleon's dictum, that "there will be no real peace in history, till the whole generation contemporary with the French Revolution is extinct to the very last man," and even later. Mr. Bryce holds that though usually interesting, and often illuminating, what are called historian's parallels, are often misleading. He tells how, during the great dispute in 1876 after the Bulgarian massacres, between those who thought we ought to back the Sultan, and those who were equally convinced the other way, he met one day in the street an eminent historical professor, who was fond of descanting on the value of history as a guide to politics. They talked of the crisis in the East. "I said 'Here is a fine opportunity for applying your doctrines. Party politi-

cians may be divided, but no student of history can doubt which is the right course for the Government to follow towards Russia and the Turks.' 'Certainly,' he replied, 'the teachings of history are plain.' 'You mean, of course,' I said, scenting some signs of disagreement, 'that we ought to warn the Sultan that he is wholly in the wrong, and can have no support from us.' 'No, indeed,' rejoined my friend, 'I mean just the opposite.'"

In truth, say what we will of the unity of history and the identity in the elements of human nature, the general body of two political cases is never exactly the same. Nations are not the same, their ideals are wide apart, their standing aims and preoccupations are different. It is inconceivable to Eng-

National ideals never the same.

lishmen and Germans and especially Scotsmen, most idealist of all, that men should not care for great industrial enterprises, persistent experiment, wide mercantile adventure. They reproach the Latin countries with lack of energy, and cannot understand a French writer who says there is a commercial industry and prosperity that his countrymen do not envy, and actually suggests that those who are alarmed, should ask themselves whether, after all, poverty may not be for nations, what it has so often been for individuals, the mark of the elect.[1] So true is it that in more senses than one nations do not use the same language. And what is true of nations, applies just as aptly to historic periods.

A good-natured international smile

[1] Sabatier, *L'Orientation relig. de la France*, p. 166.

may be forgiven at the ingenious parallel discovered by a learned historian of Hellenism,[1] between Macedonia in the days of Alexander the Great, and Prussia in the time of Prince Bismarck. The Greeks, it seems, mastered by the spirit of the canton and the city-state, thought nothing of their land as a whole, until a barbarian from the north perceived it, made "the synthesis of their civilization," and spread it over the world; whereas if Demosthenes had won the battle, a desperate state of things would have survived. So if Sadowa and Sedan had gone amiss, the resplendent orb of German radiance and intellectual power would never have broken through the nebulous skies of a disunited fatherland,

[1] Droysen, as cited in Guilland's *L'Allemagne Nouvelle et ses Historiens*, p. 191.

Germany and France as rival civilizing forces.

and diffused its beams over the civilized world. The same singular parallel finds still more emphatic expression in that admirable man and historic thinker, Döllinger. For once forgetting the serene truth that sovereign gifts of thought, imagination, discovery have not been quite unequally distributed among the modern nations of the Western world, Döllinger with strange excess of emphasis insists that Germany is the intellectual centre from which proceed the great ideas that sway the world. She attracts all thought within her scope, shapes it, and sends it forth into the universe clothed with a power that is her own. No other nation, he proceeds, can approach the German people in many-sidedness; no other possesses in so great a measure, side by side with this

power of adaptation, the qualities of untiring research and original creative genius. Out of all the nations of the modern world, the German people are most "like the Greeks of old." They "have been called to an intellectual priesthood, and to this high vocation they have done no dishonour."[1] Greeks or not, nobody will deny the magnificence of German contribution, though much of that grand contribution in Germany, as in Greece, is due to small States. And can we escape an ironic start after all this, on encountering the proposition that "vanity is the accepted characteristic of the French nation"? The force of the Macedonian parallel, whatever it amounts to, is weakened, if it is not shattered, by Mill's broad declaration

[1] *Conversations of Dr. Döllinger*, Eng. Trans. (1892), p. 205.

that the ascendancy of a ruder civilization, and the subjection by brute strength of a superior civilization, is sheer mischief to the human race, and one that civilized humanity with one accord should rise in arms to prevent. The absorption of Greece by Macedonia, he says, was one of the greatest misfortunes that ever happened to the world.[1] So harshly may illustrious philosophic oracles fall out of tune.

**Goethe on French contribution.**

Leaving ancient history aside, I cannot but recall the Macedonian Goethe's generous recognition of his debt to the supposed Græculi of France; how he delighted in Diderot, and even translated one of his famous dialogues, usually found far too broad and tatterdemalion for English taste; how he admired the

[1] *Representative Government*, chap. xvi.

tone of good manners in French translation of his own books, due, as he supposes, to their habit of thinking and speaking for a great public, whereas in Germany, he says, "the writer speaks as if he were alone, and you only hear a single voice." In other words, French literature — and literature, we should remember, differs from Science as it does from Music — is so essentially sociable. We know its masters in the seventeenth century — Pascal, La Fontaine, Molière, Bossuet, Fénelon, de Sévigné, La Bruyère, Saint Simon. We know the writers who stand for main currents in the eighteenth — Bayle, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Encyclopædists, Rousseau. In the nineteenth, without ignoring the fame of Goethe, Schiller, Heine, the French are not without some reason for the vanity that is

imputed to them. French writers conspicuously engaged the attention of mankind. They turned thought and interest and curiosity and search for intellectual pleasure into new channels. They led the great changes in mood, standard, and point of view during the three generations after Napoleon Bonaparte, and typified ideals of an active and aspiring age. De Maistre Proudhon, Saint Simon (not the famous journalist of Versailles, but the earliest name in the socialistic ferment a hundred years ago), and Comte, unapproached by any of them in the power, originality, and intellectual resource with which he wove together the strands of knowledge into the web of social duty — were all effective writers as well as fresh thinkers. There was Guizot, founder of new historic schools,

and one of those who by force of personality apart from literary contribution exercise a potent influence on their time. Renan brought wide learning and infinite fascination of form to a theological dissolution that science, and the widening of men's minds by the widening of the known world, made so inevitable. Victor Hugo, amid a thousand colossal extravagances, sounded to an enormous public all over the world a rolling thunderblast against the barbarities of recorded time, and was inspired by a glorious muse, the genius of Pity. It would be easy to vindicate a claim for other names, mirrors of the strong movements or strange phantasies of their age — and of human nature in all ages — Michelet, Lamartine, George Sand, Balzac, Taine.

Taine: an illustrative digression.

The last of these shining names prompts a word of digression on a point in what I have already said on the fortunes of books. Taine was a strenuous worker and high-hearted man if ever man was. His six volumes on the French Revolution, its antecedents, and its sequel, are admirably attractive as literature. But literary splendour did not prevent it from being a marked case of the fluctuations of men's verdicts on the causes and significance of events, and the authority of their interpreters. The book has enjoyed immense vogue in Europe. It fell in with the reactionary mood that followed the overthrow of the Second Empire, and that desperate catastrophe, political and moral, the Commune. Its claim to be history has been almost painfully exposed by the more authentic writer of another

school. "The document does not speak to Taine," says his critic; "it is he who all the time is speaking to the document." [1]

Every method has its own perils, and the perils of Taine's method are plain. He tells us, Whether the man be actor on the great stage of our world's affairs, or an inspirer, creator, discoverer in the realms of knowledge, truth, and beauty, character and work flow from some master faculty within him, in limits set by race, by surroundings, by the hour. But then, alas, such unity is for art, and not for history. As an achievement of literary ingenuity, Taine's hundred pages upon Napoleon Bonaparte[2] are consummate. The elements are skilfully com-

[1] *Taine, Historien de la Rév. Franc.* Par M. Aulard, p. 326. Faguet's *Questions Politiques* (1903), pp. 2, 19.

[2] *Origines de la France Contemporaine,* Régime Moderne, vol. i. chap. i.

pounded, the fusion in the furnace is perfect, the molten stream runs truly into all the channels of the mould, and a form of superhuman might is reared upon its pedestal. This is not the way in which things really happen. For that it is no wonder that the critic takes down a volume of Cardinal de Retz, with the stir and spirit of affairs in full circulation, and the actors, as Retz says, "hot and smoking" with violence and faction. Or he might take some strong pages of Clarendon, Burnet, Bolingbroke, Bacon, Halifax, Swift.

Distribution of national gifts.

Let us repeat: sovereign gifts of brain and heart have not been so unequally distributed over the western world, as fits of national vanity incline men to suppose. One of the drawbacks to the great uprising of the spirit of Nationality for a century past, has been — I by no

means say the extinction, but — the changed hold, of the cosmopolitan sense of human relations that sounded a silver trumpet amid all the international piracies of Silesia, Poland, and the rest. To this practical declension of what has been called allegiance to humanity, or the service of man, or over-ruling altruism, one at any rate of the correctives is the thought how in the glories of our common civilization, each nation has its own particular share, how marked the debt of all to each. How disastrous would have been the gap if European history had missed the cosmopolitan radiation of ideas from France; or the poetry, art, science of Italy; or the science, philosophy, music of Germany; or the grave heroic types, the humour, the literary force of Spain; the creation

of grand worlds in thought, wisdom, knowledge, — the poetic beauty, civil life, humane pity, — immortally associated with the past of England in the western world's illuminated scroll. It is not one tributary, but the co-operation of all, that has fed the waters and guided the currents of the main stream. We may ponder some national trilogies or quartettes. Descartes, Voltaire, Montaigne: Dante, Michelangelo, Galileo: Kant, Goethe, Beethoven: Cervantes, Columbus,[1] Las Casas: Hume, Scott,

[1] Elaborate attempts are made to show that the discoverer of America was no Genoese, but a Jew from Spanish Galicia; and President Grévy even did so unfriendly an act as to grant a decree authorizing a statue to him at Calvi in Corsica. Be all this as it may, it was in Spain that the valiant adventurer produced his designs, and found the means of executing them. Whether born at Pontevechio or Genoa, he struck such root in Spain that he lost the Italian tongue, if it was ever his. The controversies are exhaustively handled in *Revue Critique*, May 3, 1913.

Adam Smith, Burns: Erasmus, Grotius, Rembrandt: Franklin, Hamilton, Washington, Lincoln: Shakespere, Newton, Gibbon, Darwin. Choose, vary, amplify the catalogue, as we will and as we must, no nation nor nationality counts alone or paramount among the forces that have shaped the world's elect, and shared in diffusing central light and warmth among the children of mankind. To deride patriotism marks impoverished blood, but to extol it as an ideal or an impulse above truth and justice, at the cost of the general interests of humanity, is far worse. Even where men admit as much as this, it is wonderful how easily a little angry shouting makes them oblivious of its sanctity. For in spite of fair words and noble and strenuous endeavour for peace by rulers, statesmen, and most

of those who have the public ear in Europe, the scale of armament reveals the unwelcome fact that we live in a military age.

The English tongue as political vernacular.

Evolution, for reasons easily understood, is the most overworked word in all the language of the hour. But we cannot do without it, and those are right who say that in the evolution of politics nothing has been more important than the successive emergence into the practical life of States and institutions, of such moral entities as Justice, Freedom, Right. Of these glorious and sacred aspirations in substantial form, history made the English tongue their vernacular. Whether Burke in his best pieces, or Aristotle in his *Politics*, shows the wider knowledge of human nature, learned men do not decide. At least the philosopher

of small city-states, even with the brain of an Aristotle, could not be expected to have any idea of that representative government which at home here is the governing political fact of to-day, and in other lands is the political ideal. It was Locke in the seventeenth century who in connection with the settlement of the monarchy that we are decorously adjured to call a revolution and not a rebellion, first set out, as has been said, constitutional government in terms of thought, and furnished the mainspring of political philosophy for long ages after.[1] Frederick the Great says that his illumination and emancipation came from Locke, though we cannot be sure that our careful and candid sage would have found the career of his Prussian disciple a pattern

[1] Prof. Sorley in *Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit.* viii.

for princes. From him both Montesquieu and Rousseau, the famous heads of two opposed schools and rival methods, drew their inspiration. Countless are the governing systems all over the globe that have found their model here, and we may record with no ignoble pride that the tongue of our English masters of political wisdom is spoken by 160 millions, as against 130 of German, 100 of Russian, 70 of French,[1] and 50 of Spanish. Mark the change from Bacon, who sent his

[1] Here is the estimate of a competent authority as to the English-speaking population of the globe — over forty-five millions in the United Kingdom; about twelve millions in Canada and Australia; at least five millions in various parts of British Africa; in India 1,672,000 literate in English, and rather less than half a million whose English is vernacular, and it is the official language of the annual Congress; say a million in other British possessions. If we take into account the various forms of pigeon English spoken in British possessions and elsewhere, one might make the total sixty-five millions. Finally, the modest addition of something under 100 millions in the United States.

*Advancement of Learning* to Prince Charles in a new Latin dress, because a book could only live in the "general language," and English books cannot be "citizens of the world." Cromwell as Protector could only talk to ambassadors in dog-Latin. I do not forget that among 90 or 100 millions of our triumphant figure, the King's writ does not run; for these expanding millions live, not under our bluff Union Jack, but under Stars and Stripes. Still less can we forget that French is the most œcumenical of all living tongues; so sociable, so exact, so refined, copious, and subtle, in its diversity of shades in every field, grave and gay; so apt alike for what is trivial and frivolous, and for high affairs of thought or business.

The only parallel to the boundless

area of the habitable globe conquered by our tongue, is held by some to be Arabic. They tell us that though Arabic in Islamic lands, for some three or four centuries became the medium for an active propagation of ideas, and though by the Koran it retains its hold in its own area, and keeps in its literary as distinct from its spoken form the stamp of thirteen centuries ago, yet there is no real analogy or comparison with the diffusion of English. Latin is a better analogy. It was spoken pretty early in the towns of Spain, Gaul, Britain, and somewhat later in the provinces on the Danube. In the East it spread more slowly, but by the Antonines and onwards the use of Latin was pretty complete, even in northern Africa. Greek was common throughout the Empire as the language of com-

merce in the fourth century. St. Augustine says, "Pains were taken that the Imperial State should impose not only its political yoke, but its own tongue, upon the conquered peoples, *per pacem societatis*." This is what is slowly coming to pass in India. Though to-day only a handful, a million or so, of the population use our language, yet English must tend to spread from being the official tongue to be a general unifying agent. Any Englishman who adds to the glory of our language and letters, will deserve Cæsar's grand compliment to Cicero, declaring it a better claim to a laurel crown to have advanced the boundaries of Roman genius, than the boundaries of Roman rule. Whether Cæsar was sincere or insincere, it is a noble truth for us as well as for old Rome.

VI

Nationalist sentiment changed to political idea.

From reflections on the contributions of great nations to various aspects and phases of general civilization, it is no abrupt transfer of thought to turn to what is perhaps the most marked of all the agitations of the nineteenth century, the political movement for national autonomy. In the sentiment of nationality there is nothing new. It was one of the main keys of Luther's Reformation. What is new is the transformation of the sentiment into a political idea. Old history and fresh politics worked a union that has grown into an urgent and dominating force. Oppression, intolerable economic disorder, governmental failure, senseless wars, senseless ambitions, and the misery that was their

baleful fruit, quickened the instinct of Nationality. First it inflamed visionaries, then it grew potent with the multitudes, who thought the foreigner the author of their wretchedness. Thus Nationality went through all the stages. From instinct it became idea; from idea abstract principle; then fervid prepossession; ending where it is to-day, in dogma, whether accepted or evaded.

Partition of Poland.

A man who wishes to trace perplexities to their source will not forget the history of the claims, ambitions, and pretensions of Prussia, Austria, Russia, when they partitioned Poland 140 years ago. Well did Burke in 1772 warn Europe that Poland was only a breakfast for the great armed powers, but where would they dine? "After all our love of tranquillity," he exclaimed, "and all our

expedients to preserve it, alas! poor Peace!" And well does the historian to-day[1] declare, in a poignant sentence, the partition of Poland might have been a statesmanlike performance if it could have stopped in 1772. "But *history never does stop short*," and in twenty years Europe found itself in the whirlpool of the French revolutionary wars that came to a close at Waterloo. I have spoken of senseless wars. It must be confessed that the passion of Nationality has an ample share in most of them for the last hundred and twenty years, sometimes as cause, sometimes as pretext.

**Advent of Mazzini.**

Among the glowing spirits who have been pillars of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night — agents in transforming abstract social idealism into violent

[1] Sorel, *La Question d'Orient au XVIII^e Siecle* (1878), p. 306.

political demand, — after Rousseau in date, Mazzini came. What the first was from the fall of the Bastille in 1789 until Napoleon's rise in 1800, this was Mazzini in the era after Waterloo. Each was main inspirer of the commanding impulse of an epoch, each the fervid apostle of a driving principle. We need not overlook Fichte's *Addresses* to Germany, or the splendid utterances of all the passion and all the reason that broke forth in the ever-memorable uprising against Napoleon in 1813. Spain had been earlier in the same protest, and in a struggle no less victorious. Poland was destined to bear the banner of nationality for desperate generation after generation, and Hungary shook Western Europe with her story. But the Congress of Vienna achieved a European settlement

that set nationality at defiance, and the despots whom the national spirit had enabled to overthrow the great French captain, instantly took in hand the extinction of all the light and sacred fire of that very spirit. It was this systematized defiance, that outraged his whole nature in Mazzini.

Without forgetting the splendid elevation of Channing, most eloquent of American divines, in the struggles for human freedom in northern America, the Italian was in wider range than politics the most fervid moral genius of his time. No other man of his century ever united intense political activity with such affluence of moral thought and social feeling. Prophets have a right to be unreasonable, and in many a page, as in acts not a few, Mazzini goes beyond

unreason into the flagrantly irrational. Italian genius more characteristically positive, practical, and supple than Mazzini's was needed for Italian objects. Yet it was fortunate for them that his rare spirit had its ascendancy. He was loud and over-loud against those whom he chose to deride as the busy race of jugglers, petty Machiavels of the antechamber, trading politicians, ready in all countries to swear and to forswear, to launch out boldly or creep ashore according to the wind. It is not such men as these with their crooked ways, court intrigues, and false doctrines of expediency, that will create a people. Do not think that men of that sort will ever rise to such a spiritual heat for the nation, as shall carry forward a cause like this; as will meet all the oppositions

that the devil and wicked men can make. "Machiavelli," he cried, "has for long ages prevailed over Dante. To save Italy and awaken the soul in Europe, you must return to that immortal spring of a people's noblest aspirations." With penetrating eye he was alive to the saving truth of "Italy a Nation." His argument was inexorable. In other countries impatience of inequality and suffering had in 1848 driven men in search of a new order. In Italy twenty-five millions of men were rising for an idea; what they sought was a country. When they had conquered the foreigner, freedom as well as independence would be won. No aim but the creation of Italy, and Mazzini put on his pamphlets an epigraph from Euclid, "The right line is the shortest that can be drawn between two points."

The Italian Prophet and geometrical politics.

No fallacy has ever wrought more disastrous ravages. Euclid lived a good many hundred years ago, but he must at any rate have had too clear a head not to be aware that geometry is not politics. "The papacy," again, "now no more than a symbol for absolutist government, must be dethroned. While the idol stands, its shadow will cast darkness around; priests, Jesuits, and fanatics will shelter themselves beneath its shade to disturb the world; while it stands, discord will exist between moral and material society, between right and fact, between the present and the imminent future." It is at least certain that Mazzini's teaching was not merely the most direct attempt to dethrone the temporal Pope and with him dogmatic and secularized Churches, but to set up

a new spiritual gospel in their place, and to light up human life and public duty with new meaning.

Nationality as the revolutionary secret.

As men with an instinct or a reasoned feeling for emancipation, even now turn over Mazzini's burning pages, in spite of pungent reflections that cannot be suppressed on what would have come of it all but for "political jugglers" like Cavour and Napoleon III., and the guilty errors of expediency, they may still find the passion of it irresistible. How much more can we imagine the flame that it kindled in the breast of generations to whom the hideous dungeons of Naples, and all the other abominations and degradations of foreign rule in Italy, were cruel haunting spectres of their own days. Nationality became the deepest and most powerful of revolutionary secrets. Of

the Empire and the Papacy, the two wielders of the forces of cohesion through the middle age, it is truly said that they were neither national nor international, but supra-national. On their decline, and for other causes, nationality grew to be an unsuspected sequel. Happily for the prophet, the time brought a statesman. Four Italians played high parts in modern history, and Cavour, endowed with the union of force and brains that is named *virtù*, is called as supple as Mazarin, as ingenious as Alberoni, as intrepid and swift as Napoleon.

What is a Nation?

Though no term in politics is of more frequent use than Nation, it is not easy to define. There are almost as many accounts of it, as we have found in other terms of the political dialect. John Bright was thinking of kinder and hu-

maner things than definition, when he spoke his famous sentence of such moving simplicity — the polar star of civilized statesmen — that the nation in every country dwells in the cottage. What constitutes a nation; what marks it from a Nationality, from a Society, from a State? The question is not idle or academic. It generates active heat in senates and on platforms, for example, at this moment, whether this or that portion of our United Kingdom is either nation or nationality. When the idea was mooted of France seeking compensation after the Prussian victory at Sadowa, important men denounced it as "blasphemy against the principle of nationalities." Let us theorize for a moment. Here is what the dictionary has to tell us of a Nation: "An extensive aggregate

of persons, so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organized as a separate political state, and occupying a definite territory." This is adequate enough, and consonant with usage. But, then, Belgium is a political State and yet its Walloon and Flemish provinces are not common in descent, tongue, or history, and their dissidence is at this very day something of an active issue. Austro-Hungary is a great State, though they speak twenty-four languages in the Austrian army. Another authority finds in usage, — *quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi*, — that "wherever a community has both political independence and a distinctive character recognizable in its members, as well as

in the whole body, we call it a nation." For a test to be applied all over the world, this is perhaps too vague. Freeman lays it down in his own imperative way, that the question what language they speak, goes further than any other one question towards giving us an idea of what we call the nationality of a people. We may say, again, that the feeling of nationality is due to identity of descent, common language, common religion, common pride in past incidents. But no single element in the list makes a decisive test. Language will not answer the purpose; for Switzerland has three languages, yet is one nation. In South America there are two kindred languages; mostly common descent, common pride in their wresting of independence from Europe, common religious faith. Yet

there are sixteen communities more or less entitled to the rank of nations, and the traveller tells us there is no sense of a common Spanish-American nationality. Is Nationality to be decided by the political character of territory, or by the people who inhabit it? In older days the first was the prevailing theory. The second prevails to-day, and is one of the marks of modern system, as we may discern in Balkan perplexities. Devotion to a dynasty has made nations. So has passion for a creed. So, perhaps, most of all, that *ingenita erga patriam caritas*, the natural fondness for the land where we are born.

Ethnologic admixture.

The lineal descent of national stocks, through dim ages with no sure or intelligible chronicler, offers a boundless opening for ethnologic disputation. Learned

men maintain, for instance, and men no less learned deny, that the Hellenic race in Europe has been exterminated, and that the modern Greeks are a mixture of the descendants of Roman slaves and Sclavonian colonists. Yet, however this may be, the Greek name and all its glittering associations, over the whole field of politics, ethics, poetry, and art, seem enough to inspire nationality in its most evident sense. The absorption by a population of new modifying elements appears an obscure and mysterious process. The problem is at this day presenting itself on a truly colossal scale in the United States, where the old floods of immigration from Ireland and Germany are now replenished by swelling hosts from Southern and Central Europe, Italians, Hungarians, Poles, Russian

Jews, and the rest, changing both racial and religious proportions, while the negro contingent, imported in the old slave-holding days, though increasing at a slower rate than the white, is still some 10 or 11 per cent of the whole. Yet the political nationality of the United States, their high and strong self-consciousness as a nation, is one of the supreme factors in the modern world's affairs.

Spain and Napoleon.

The resistance of Spain to Napoleon from 1808 to 1813 has been called the greatest European event since the French Revolution; it showed Europe that a conqueror may shake a State to pieces, and yet the nation hold together. The machinery of the Spanish State was violently overthrown, but common religious passion, the inheritance of common language, ferocious common pride in

triumphant warfare for ten long centuries against hated faith and blood, all awoke and maintained in full blaze, on Napoleon's uncalculating provocation, those intense elements of national vitality in relation to which the organized State is but secondary. Tyrol, Moscow, Leipzig, are names for immortal chapters in the story of national uprisings, that lent their new and overwhelming force to the soldiers and rulers who worked the political systems of the hour. It has been noted as one of the curious ironies of history that it was the victor of Marengo and Austerlitz who first since the Lombard kingdom, a thousand years before, established unity of government in the Italian peninsula, and laid the foundations of modern Italy.

Sicily.

Sicily has found a dwelling-place for

many nations, but as the most learned of our historians truly assures us, a Sicilian nation there has never been. Europe, Asia, Africa, have all met in the great central island of the Mediterranean. Greek, Punic, Roman, Mussulman, Christian, Saracen, Arab, Norman, Spaniard, have all in strange turns been ruling and subject inhabitants. Of the unity of historical antecedents, supposed to be essential to a nationality, there is little trace for a single decade of Sicilian annals until 1859. Yet Sicily has played a part of its own in the records of Nationality, from the Sicilian Vespers in the thirteenth century down to Garibaldi and Crispi in the nineteenth.

National and Cosmopolitan.

Let me venture on a parting observation as to Nationality. It has been on the whole a commanding and accepted

impulse for our era. Yet it has been contemporary with a current tendency of equal strength, but directly opposite. One chief mark of the same time has been the advance of Science in all its branches and forms. But Science works not at all for Nationality or its spirit. It makes entirely for Cosmopolitanism. In multifarious congresses in every capital of the world nationality is effaced. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, meet on common terms, and liberty, equality, and fraternity all prevail, without intermixture from diplomatic sophistries. Science, besides all else that it is and does, is the strongest unifying agent of the time, especially if we include the inventions that science makes possible, and the commerce that inventions stimulate and nourish. Even those who are least disposed to share the

common exultation over the throng of new inventions due to new scientific knowledge, may perceive that the respect for scientific rules and methods which bring these fresh conveniences to our doors, tends to spread itself in the popular mind through the whole circle of men's opinion, even in matters of daily talk and life far remote from the atmosphere of science. This respect marks the general advent and common diffusion of a new intellectual force and spirit.

## VII

Progress as spontaneous force and fixed historic law.

Another question that I can here do little more than note, has long had irresistible interest for powerful minds. It could not be otherwise. Is the track all upward? That is not all. The question strikes far deeper than merely social and

political interest. It goes to the very quick of modern interpretation of the working of past history and our present universe. There are, we may suppose, three explanations, theories, or hypotheses of the course of human things, and the power that guides them, shapes them, and controls them. One assigns this supreme mysterious control to Providence; a second to laws of Evolution; a third to a beneficent and steadfast necessity, in which we confidently trust under the name of Progress. Such is the modern aspect of an eternal riddle, — far too momentous for us to confront here. But you will let me offer one or two remarks upon the divinity of Progress, in its ordinary mundane acceptation. Progress, like Toleration, or Equality, is one of the reigning words most

familiar in common use, yet having extremely diverse significance. It stands for a hundred different things. Whether we mean advance in material civilization during historic time; or advance in the strength and wealth of human nature; or advance in ideals of human society — and these are evidently neither identical nor always contemporary — causes are assumed to be constantly at work, tending both to raise the high-water mark of civilization, and to spread its various successive gains over a wider level. Do you mean progress in talents and strength of mind? Clear thinkers have declared that they find no reason to expect it, and that there is as much of these, and often more, in an ignorant than in a cultivated age. But there is, they go on to say, great progress, and great reason to expect

progress, in feelings and opinions.[1] Close examination forces us to be content with something far short of this assumption. A universal law, for all times, all States, all Societies, Progress is not. There is no more interesting problem, for instance, in the region of modern historic speculation, than the decline of the Latin race in the southern half of the American hemisphere, contrasted with the boundless advance both in material prosperity and mental vigour of the English, Scotch, Irish, and French stocks among their northern neighbours. Progress, says one grave thinker, not overstating a plain historic truth, "is the rare exception; races may remain in the lowest barbarism, or their development be arrested at some more advanced

[1] Mill's *Letters*, ii. 359.

stage; actual decay may alternate with progress, and even true progress implies some admixture of decay."[1] An extraordinarily copious and impressive elaboration of such a line of thought, is to be found in a work of twenty years ago, on National Life and Character, of which, whatever we may decide about its central thesis as a forecast, we may say that it opens, collects, expounds, and illustrates, vast issues in the evolution of States and races, better worth examining and thinking about, than can be found in any other book of the same period.[2]

A modern idea.

From vast tracts and periods of literature, it is almost startling to think that the idea of progress, which is the animating force of so much of the thought,

[1] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the 18th Century*, i. 17.

[2] *National Life and Character: a Forecast*, by Charles H. Pearson, 1893.

writing, and action of the civilized world to-day, is wholly absent. You only find glimpses of it here and there among Greeks and Romans. Early Christians could care little for a world which they regarded as doomed to extinction at a near date. The thought of retrogression is constant. Sages and poets in every age have warned States and their rulers of the inevitable decay that awaits them, as it awaits each mortal man himself. In some who were most alive to the decline in standards of life and government, there burned a fervid hope that somehow declension would be arrested, though the conditions that produced it were to be essentially unaltered. If the past had been all wrong, what certainty of the same agencies that had governed the past, being either dispersed, or forced

to prepare a future that should be all right? Bishop Berkeley, for example, the most ardent philanthropist of his day, despaired of the distempered civilization of his country, and showed in practice by missionary emigration to Rhode Island, his faith, after the decay of Europe, in a golden age and a new Fifth Empire in the American West —

The seat of innocence,
Where Nature guides and virtue rules,
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense,
The pedantry of courts and schools.

He did not realize how many of the pedantic elements would inevitably be transplanted, and how many of the impediments to virtue, truth, and sense would survive change of scene and clime. Even for ourselves, authority is not all one way. Angles and distances make all

Modern improvements.

the difference to the eagles and falcons who survey history. We know more and more of Nature in the world of matter; we have more power over its energies; men have increased and multiplied and spread out over the globe; life is longer; vigour and endurance have waxed, not waned. International law, though important chapters are still to come, has made much way since Grotius wrote one of the cardinal books in European history. Forgive me for mentioning what is at the moment a word of wrath. The curse of industrial life is insecurity. The principle of insurance applied to risks of every kind has extended and ramified in a truly extraordinary way during the last fifty years, until it is now one of the subtlest international agencies, uniting distant interests

and creating perforce a thousand mutual obligations. A portion of mankind has access to higher standards of comfort and well-being. For a thousand years, Michelet says, Europe was unwashed. That at least is no longer absolutely true. While these happy forward motions please our eye and thought, they demonstrate no determined law of social history. Towering States have vanished, like shooting stars. Rome is not, in Byron's plangent line, the only lone mother of dead empires. The desolation of history at Paestum or Segesta, at Ephesus, Olympia, Syracuse, is more awful than the sublime desolation of nature in tracts of Alpine ice.

Comparative prosperity of the ancient empire.

You remember Gibbon's declaration that if a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was

most happy and prosperous, he would without hesitation name the period between the death of Domitian and the accession of Commodus. It is nearly a century and a half since Gibbon wrote. The trenchant historian of Rome of our own day and generation, with characteristic daring, puts and answers the same question. "If an angel of the Lord," Mommsen assures us, " were to strike the balance whether the domain ruled by Severus Antoninus was governed with the greater intelligence and the greater humanity then or now, whether civilization and general prosperity have since then advanced or retrograded, it is very doubtful whether the decision would favour the present." That there is another side, everybody knows. Slavery was the horrid base. Pagan satirists and

Christian apologists alike have drawn dark pictures of the imperial world. From opposing points, exaggeration of its wickedness was their common cue. Long after the old stern and triumphant Rome had sunk, after the storm of barbaric invasion had abated, after literature had been recovered, take an ensuing span of Italian history, what was the progress? Some of you may have come across a vivid picture of the memorable sixteenth century in Italy, drawn by Taine after reading Benvenuto Cellini, Boccaccio, Machiavelli, Vasari. "This Italian society of the sixteenth century," he says, in the literary undress of a private letter, "is an assemblage of ferocious brutes with passionate imagination. The footmen of to-day would not endure the company of the Duke and Duchess of

Ferrari, of Paul III., Julius II., Borgia, etc. No wit nor grace nor ease nor amiability, no gentleness, no ideas, no philosophy. Pedantry, gross superstition, risk of death at every instant, the necessity of fighting at every street corner for life or purse, harlotry and worse than harlotry — all with a crudity and a brutality beyond belief." And learned modern inquirers, competent in wide range of knowledge, insist that, difficult as it must be to gauge the average morality of any age, "it is questionable whether the average morality of civilized ages has largely varied." Evidence enough remains that there was in ancient Rome, as in London or Manchester to-day, "a preponderating mass of those who loved their children and their homes, who were good neighbours and

faithful friends, who conscientiously discharged their civil duties."[1] Even the Eastern Roman Empire, that not many years ago was usually dismissed with sharp contempt, is now recovered to history, and many centuries in its fluctuating phases are shown to have been epochs of an established State, with well-devised laws well administered, with commerce prosperously managed, and social order conveniently worked and maintained.

Reproofs to optimistic superstition.

Mill puzzled us many years ago (1857) by what seemed an audacious doubt. "Hitherto it is questionable," he said, "if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being. They have enabled a

[1] Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, p. 138.

greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number to make fortunes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny, which it is in their nature and in their futurity to accomplish."[1] This doubt, when quickened into fervid activity of mixed pity and anger, by its clash with new ideals of the human lot, has bred a fresh Socialism, the immense perplexity of ruling men to-day. Whether Socialism can be the assured key to progress, is still a secret. Meanwhile, it is unjust to history to overlook the strenuous efforts that have softened the hardships incident to spread of mechanical invention. The "drudgery and imprisonment" is not what it was. Child labour

[1] *Polit. Econ.* ii. 326.

has been abolished. The labour of women is guarded. The hours of men are reduced. I need not tell over again all that beneficent tale; it saved the nation. Its full effects are still uncounted. Mill was not afraid of an economically "stationary state," but then he appended the emphatic proviso that the question of population should always be held in due regard. He did not live to see a Europe where the military rivalry of divided nations has for the moment violently shifted that vital question into unexpected bearings, because ratio of population is one of the main elements in all computations of fighting strength. It is the recruiting sergeant now holds the international scales.

The decrepitude that ended in the Latin conquest of Constantinople at the

beginning of the thirteenth century, and the Mahometan conquest in the middle of the fifteenth, is an awkward reproof to the optimist superstition that civilized communities are universally bound somehow or another to be progressive. Whether that decrepitude was due to Byzantine incompetence for working government on the vast imperial scale, or to the misuse of intellectual energy in futile and exasperating polemics, or to the gross and crushing subjection of spiritual power to temporal, — these are questions of the first interest to all who seek philosophic history. They are neighbours, too, to a wider question that has no little actuality to-day. For some observers, who know and have thought much about it, pronounce it not clear that Western

Islam.

contact with Eastern races will increase

the sum of human happiness. And what of evolution among Eastern races themselves? From time to time attempts are made by reforming Moslems to discover a basis for "liberalism" in the Koran itself. Only a few years ago, for example, was published an address from Moslems in Tunis to a French official, earnestly assuring him by an ingenious assortment of texts that there was nothing in the Koran incompatible in spirit, if not exactly in letter, with the immortal "principles of '89." Thence they argue that just as Christianity has passed through slavery, intolerance, and degrading incidents connected with the seclusion of women, so the religion of Mahomet may, like Christianity, make its way into a higher and purer air. That Islamism is a marked advance for backward races is

generally admitted, and that it is not incompatible with solid intelligence and all manly virtues we know. We hardly find instances to-day on any marked scale of its capacity to adapt itself to all the modern requirements of a civilized State. Some observers, however, hold a more sanguine view. Whether nationality is likely to take the bond of religion in Moslem countries, is another question not easy to answer. There may be a tendency in that direction, and it may be stimulated by the decline of Turkish power.[1]

After all, it is well to measure against the procession of changes that have swept through culture, civilization, and the modern world, some stupendous fixities of human things. If we think,

[1] On these points, see Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt*, i. 136–140; Bryce's *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, ii., Essay 13.

for example, of all that Language means; of the unplumbed depths of mortal thought, mood, aim, appetite, right, duty, kindness, savagery; and yet how stable language is, and how immutably the tongues of leading stocks in the world seem to have struck their roots. Then consider the three great faiths — Christendom, Judaism, Islam — in spite of endless reformation, counter-reformation, internecine conflict within, displacements by fire and sword from without. Yet if we survey the far-stretching cosmorama of religions in their vast history, how steadfastly the name, the rites, the practices, and traditions, and intense attachment to them all, persist even after reasoning and comparative methods seem to have plucked up or worn away the dogmatic roots.

On one thing, at any rate, optimist and

Progress no automaton.

pessimist agree, that progress is no automaton, spontaneous and self-propelling. It depends on the play of forces within the community and external to it. It depends on the room left by the State for the enterprise, energy, and initiative of the individual. It depends on the absence from the general mind at a given time, of the sombre feeling, *Quota pars omnium sumus*, how small a fraction is a man's share in the huge universe of unfathomable things. It depends on no single element in social being, but on the confluence of many tributaries in a great tidal stream of history; and those tides, like the ocean itself, ebbing and flowing in obedience to the motions of an inconstant moon. Though Greek is not compulsory with you here, we may go back for the last poetic word on all this, to the

ode in the Greek play where the chorus recounts with glorious enumeration how of all the many wonders of the world, the most wondrous is Man; he makes a path across the white sea, works the land, captures or tames animals and birds for his daily use; he has devised language and from language thought, and all the moods that mould a State; he finds a help against every evil of his lot, save only death; against death and the grave he has no power. No progress, at any rate, in harmony of words or strength of imagination in the four-and-twenty centuries since Sophocles, dims the force and beauty of these ancient lines.[1]

VIII

"The State is Force."

The Italian Machiavel of the fifteenth century is applauded by a German

[1] *Antigone*, 332–64. Jebb, p. 76.

Machiavel of the nineteenth, for disclosing and impressing the mighty fundamental that "*the State is Force.*" We call Treitschke and Machiavelli by a common name without offence, because both writers have the signal courage and rare merit to proclaim what each of them takes for rigid and relentless truth. Rulers, they say, may be shy of owning that the State is Force, and the more respectable or the weaker among them do their best to find a decent veil. Still things are what they are, and the politic augur does not deceive himself. Political right and wrong depends on the practice of your age, and on what is done by other people. Machiavelli did not go beyond common sense when he "saw no reason for fighting with foils against men who fight with poniards."

We all know, to be sure, that in one vital sense the State is Force. Yet as a bare primordial law of social existence, experience shows how easily it falls into frightfully misleading disproportion. Carlyle brought it to a startling point, when he declared that after all the fundamental question between any two human beings is, "Can I kill thee, or canst thou kill me?" But is the main truth actually this, that brutality, whether naked or in uniform and peruke, is the fundamental postulate between rulers and ruled, or between governments and nations on the two sides of a frontier? The judge, the constable, the sheriff, as we know well enough, are indispensable against foes within, and the soldier with his rifle for foes across the frontier. Still the principle is no beacon-fire, until we have

In what sense true.

vigilantly explored it. What sort of State, what sort of Force? What is to be the place of the Minister of Police in internal government? Is there to be a jury of twelve honest men in a box, and a writ of habeas corpus, and no privilege conceded to an official of the State against the civil rights of ordinary citizens? The formula of force would not have been rejected, so far as it goes, by William the Silent, Cromwell, Turgot, Washington, Lincoln, or any other of the small host who pass for mankind's political deliverers. It would have been silently accepted, if they had stooped to theorize, by the most barbarous tyrants in modern history, from Ezzelino in the thirteenth century, down to King Bomba in the nineteenth. There is no more revolting chapter in the annals of Christendom than

the Spanish Inquisition. Yet it was in fact a definite branch of the State, and at an *auto-da-fé* any Familiar with a conscience might have murmured, as he heaped the faggots round his firm-souled victim, that after all the State is Force. So, too, the Jacobin with his guillotine.

Manifold are the types of State and the conditions of the Force, — by whom, for instance, and on what terms it is wielded. The maxim does not harden into a doctrine fit for use, until in a given case we know of the force, what are its instruments and origins, the nature of its energies. What is the power of its action for social stability on the one hand, and social motion, whether forward or backward, on the other? How stands it towards opinion and law, the two great agencies of government? Above

all, let us know what price it costs, when the full and final balance has been struck.

Cavour for ideas before cannon.

Cavour, to whom a foremost place is not denied by any of the writers of this school of Force, used to talk of "people like me who have more faith in ideas than in cannon for mending the lot of humanity."[1] Yet not Stein nor any of the builders of Germany had less patience with the abstractions of Metapolitics, — the counterpart in theories on government, to Metaphysics in speculation upon Being, — than had the first effective builder of Italy. The ideas in which he had faith, were ideas with practical aims tested by open discussion. With uncriticized bureaucracy called to no account by those over whom it is set, he had as little sympathy as with meta-

[1] *Scritti*, ii. 225.

politics. Bureaucracy has not to persuade, to compromise, to give and take, to prove and win its case in the course of free personal debate in face of rival ideas and antagonistic interests. Relieved from these wholesome exigencies, it may carry and enforce measures efficiently, but with too little security that time will prove them right. And who that has watched bureaucracy at close quarters, will deny that it is in fact more cumbrous, dilatory, and depressing for a people's political energy — and not any less so to those who work it — than that discussion in a representative assembly, which is the salutary substitute. Such a system Cavour from his heart distrusted. He was the man of parliaments, constitutional minister, murmuring on his death-bed against absolute power and state of siege.

Bismarck and Canossa.

Bismarck was a giant of the older well-known type, working through imposed authority and armed force. Before he made war, first on Austria, next on France, he declared war upon his parliament. "I recognize no authority save that of his Majesty the King, I oppose all attacks aimed at the sovereignty of the monarch, like bronze or granite." That the maxim of the State being Force does not carry us magisterially through the more subtle and delicate branches of national business, this powerful man was rapidly to learn from his rude encounter with the Church from 1875 to 1878. The famous *Culturkampf*, or fight for modern civilization, for obvious reasons is no favourite topic in Germany, but it is one of the most striking episodes in the deepest conflict

of our time. The motives of its author are obscure, — whether, like France and Belgium, he meant it for a counter to the Vatican Council; or a stroke against the Poles and Catholic particularismus in southern Germany; or a searching test of imperial unity; or an iron-handed sequel to Luther and Germanism against the Tiara beyond the mountains. Be this as it may, after a grand parliamentary drama the repulse was severe. "To Canossa," he said, recalling the mighty struggle between the Emperor and Hildebrand, "I will not go either in flesh or spirit." Yet in five years to Canossa Bismarck figuratively went, though without the three penitential days under falling snows in the Canossa courtyard, where a German prince eight hundred years before had bent before an ecclesias-

tic as daring, immovable, and potent as Prince Bismarck himself. To find that miscalculated provocation has ended in reducing your bills to a dead letter; and rallying a strong and permanent parliamentary force, was an enduring humiliation that held a lesson.

**Influence in place of Authority.**

Though the Middle Age is over, though no Hildebrand nor Innocent can now survive, yet Influence retains a share of the power so long upheld by the bolder pretensions of Authority. Well may the Roman Church be described as the most wonderful structure that "the powers of human mind and soul, and all the elemental forces at mankind's disposal have yet reared" (*Acton*). Here we meet a branch of politics that only too plainly deserves attention from those who care in the fullest sense to comprehend

the problems of their time. History has brought the relation of spiritual power and temporal into many aspects and bearings all over Europe. It touches vivid controversies on schools, religious congregations, endowments, churches, "exalting their mitred front in court and parliament," and is not likely soon to disappear. It is not for me here to do more than glance at it. I will not linger on Erastus, the Heidelberg doctor of ill-omened name, who in the sixteenth century propounded (or did not propound) the doctrine of the supremacy of the civil magistrate in things ecclesiastical, that raises many violent disputations in relation to English and Scotch establishment.[1] The Erastian principle has been

[1] See *The Thesis of Erastus touching Excommunication*, by Rev. Robert Lee, Edinburgh, 1844.

greatly transformed in the United Kingdom in the last sixty years, and further transformations await it. The internal temper and spirit of the Church of England has undergone immense changes within the same period, and to what extent these internal changes have altered the value set upon secular privilege, either by her members or in external opinion, remains an active issue.

However that may stand, the Roman Church, for good or for evil, has in itself qualities of a State that do not belong even to the most vigorous and exclusive of Protestant communions. A famous French writer, a Piedmontese statesman of the Napoleonic age, wrote a book in 1817 upon the Pope, defining and vindicating the papal sovereignty, in the same temper and on the same lines as the

Machiavellian school in the area of State. De Maistre has been styled one of the Vatican's prætorian guard. In his dogmatic fixity, his poor opinion of mankind, his hatred of all individual claim, his readiness to shape an argument in anger, that tells and hits the mark without wounding — this most brilliant of all theocrats recalls many a chapter of the indomitable Treitschke. If there were time, an illuminating comparison might be worked out between them.[1] Like some of the greatest pontiffs whose power he exalted, he was that compound of the profound mystic with man of the world, which often causes us so much surprise — unreasonable and unconsidered, for few compounds are more common

Spiritual power as organized State.

[1] A piece upon De Maistre is to be found in my *Critical Miscellanies* (ed. of 1886), vol. ii.

even in a rationalistic age. I only name De Maistre, because it is always an advantage to have theories systematically set out; and his initial proposition that infallibility in the spiritual order, and sovereignty in the temporal order are pure synonyms, is a useful warning to those who suppose that the principle of the State being Force is a conclusive, satisfying, comprehensive formula, finally summing up the case of civilized government. His argument is simple. Any organized society demands a government. On various grounds, in the organized Catholicism of Rome, that government must be a monarchy, and being infallible it must be absolute over all such as choose to remain its subjects, — subjects called by the kinder name of children. In imposing such force as he

commands upon remonstrants, the pontiff will be careful to avoid collision with domestic laws of temporal sovereigns, just as Prince Bismarck found out that they will be wise to avoid collision with him. Treitschke's doctrine provoked plenty of antagonism in the temporal world, and the corresponding way of dealing with spiritual sovereignty has not been approved by all who find repose or shelter within the Roman fold. Nothing, say eminent men among them, can be more remote from the political notions of monarchy than pontifical authority. That authority is not the will of the rulers, but the law of the Church, binding those who have to administer it as strictly as those who have to obey. Arbitrary power is made impossible by that prodigious system of canon law,

which is the ripe fruit of the experience and inspiration of eighteen hundred years.[1] So be it. Yet the attempt by theocratic partisans, from the majestic Bossuet down to the meagre Pobedonostzeff in our own day, to insist upon a difference, whether the government be legitimate or revolutionary, Prince, Pope, or Demos, between absolute and arbitrary, tested by demands of practice is little more than sophistry. You will be glad to escape to safer and more secular ground, but these topics are by no means out of date, and they deserve the interest of intelligent readers of the newspapers.

Clenchers of *Real-Politik.*

"How vague and cloudy," we are told by good readers, "were many of the German treatises of the last 60 years on

[1] Acton, *History of Freedom and other Essays*, 1907, p. 192.

the theory of the State." Even those who insist most strongly that the abstract paves the way for the concrete, that the transcendental is the only secure basis for order by government, and that evolution of the Absolute is the right precursor of Sadowa and Sedan, cannot but admit that in Germany at least it was the dynasty of historians, and not the abstract men, who supplied the final clenchers for public opinion and national resolution. Treitschke, the most brilliant of the dynasty, one day fell upon a volume of the letters of Cavour. Admiring Cavour's clearness of mind, cheerful simplicity, common sense and measure, he goes on: "Nothing for a long time has chained my attention so fast. This intensely practical genius is of course different by a whole heaven's-

breadth from the great poets and thinkers that are so trusted by us Germans. Yet he stands in his own way before the riddles of the world as great as Goethe or Kant." After Sadowa Treitschke pronounced any dragoon who struck down a Croat to have done more at that moment for the German cause, than the subtlest political head with the best cut quill. To such lengths do brilliant men push things in their humour for *Real-Politik* and hurrying to be quit of the abstract. With this writer, reaction went far.[1] In an iron age, he urges, — and our age is iron, — to make peace your steadfast aim, is not only a dream, but a blind resistance to the supreme law of life that the strong must overcome the weak. It is a futile attempt to evade stern facts,

[1] *Politik:* Vorlesungen, 2 vols. (1899).

it nurses selfishness, intrigue, material greed, coarse egotism. War is the greatest school of duty, and to preach against it is not only foolish, but immoral. Frederick the Great is right, that war opens the most fruitful field for all the virtues; for steadfastness, compassion, for the lofty soul, the noble heart, for charity; every moment in war is an opportunity for one or other of these virtues. Even duelling is manly discipline in courage, self-respect, and the principle of honour.

These sanguinary sophistries find resounding echoes. One recent writer of the school inscribes for motto on his title-page — "War and brave spirit have done more great things than love of your neighbour. Not your sympathies, but your stout-hearted prowess, is what saves

the unfortunate."[1] All this glorification of war, although shining poets of our own lent to it the genius of their music not so many years ago, is surely as disastrous an outcome for the school that presents it, as was Machiavelli's choice of Cæsar Borgia to be the grand example of his Prince.

Kant's visions of a standing peace.

Let us refresh ourselves by recalling the plea for perpetual peace that came from the pen of the great German, who died at the beginning of the nineteenth century, leaving behind him a fame and influence both as metaphysician and moralist, that place him among the foremost of all his countrymen. Outside of philosophy, he owed much to Bayle, Rousseau, St. Pierre, above all to Montesquieu. But he watched the two

[1] Bernhardi, *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg.*

great affairs of his time, the revolt of the American Colonies, and the overthrow of the French monarchy, with an interest hardly less keen than that of Burke himself, with whose later views he warmly sympathized. Though supreme in the region of the abstract, he had mind left for man as a political creature in the concrete. His tracts on Cosmopolitical History, inspired from French sources, in their own day missed fire, nor is his setting of good ideas attractive in its form. It is too dogmatic, abstract, geometric. That notwithstanding, the principles of common sense applied to his ideal of permanent peace in a European federation, are stated with admirable effect. He points to the immoderate exhaustion of incessant and long preparation for war. He presses the evil conse-

quence at last entailed by war, even through the midst of peace, driving nations to all manner of costly expedients and experiments. When war ends, after infinite devastation, ruin, and universal exhaustion of energy, comes a peace on terms that plain reason would have suggested from the first. The remedy is a federal league of nations in which even the weakest member looks for protection to the united power, and the adjudication of the collective will. States, Kant predicts, must of necessity be driven at last to the very same resolution to which the savage man of nature was driven with equal reluctance; namely to sacrifice brutish liberty, and to seek peace and security in a civil constitution founded upon law. This civil constitution must in each State be republican, — a point

that may have alienated opinion in monarchical Germany, but in fact it was not meant to go beyond some one or more of the many possible shapes of representative government. As it has unfortunately happened, neither republic nor parliament has yet found itself able to walk in Kant's way, but he marks a bright patch in dubious skies.

## IX

The two Schools.

Statesmen are supposed not to take a high view of their fellow-creatures. Mazzini says of the historian of the Council of Trent, "Like most statesmen, Sarpi had no great faith in human nature." Too narrow a reading of famous Italians of the age before Sarpi, like Machiavel and Guicciardini, gives them a worse reputation in this respect than they

deserve. In England, save in bad periods, our most politic princes and rulers, though circumspect and shrewd, have been no cynics. They took human nature with wise leniency, though George III., himself a consummate politician in the worst sense, declared politics a trade for a rascal, not for a gentleman. "How goes our education business?" Frederick the Great asked of an official. "Very well," was the answer; "in old days, when the notion was that men were naturally inclined to evil, severity prevailed in schools, but now when we realize that the inclination of men is good, schoolmasters are more generous." "Alas, my dear Sulzer," was Frederick's reply, "you don't know that damned race as I do." Even those who would with truth deny that they looked on

great politics as no more than a game of skill, do not flatter their human material. Tocqueville, for instance, was philosopher, member of parliament, and foreign secretary. His experience was ample; he saw public business and its agents at first hand. His autobiographic pages are liberally strewn with allusions to the volatility of men, and to the emptiness of the great words with which they cover up their petty passions. Nations are like men, he said; they prefer what flatters their passions to what serves their interests. "I do not despise the mediocre, but I keep out of their way, I treat them like commonplaces: I honour commonplaces, for they lead the world, but they weary me profoundly." Of Napoleon III.: "It was his flightiness, rather than his reason, that, thanks to

Tocqueville on the political man.

circumstance, made his success and his power; for the world is a curious theatre, and *there are occasions where the worst pieces succeed best.*" "I found that it is with the vanity of men you do most good business, for you often gain very substantial things from their vanity, while giving little substance back. You will not do half so well with their ambition or their cupidity. But then it is true that to make the best of the vanity of other people, you must take care to lay aside all your own."

Tocqueville, however, we must remember, though in his earlier day he was the approving critic and skilful analyst of certain forms of democracy, was well described as an aristocrat who accepted his defeat. And far less conscientious, careful, and well-trained thinkers than

he, can with very little trouble lay their hands on weaknesses of human nature, and therefore of democratic systems, since they depend for their success on human nature's strength. As if autocracy, which had twice ruined the French State in his own lifetime, was free from the duperies that democracy, still less either landed or plutocrat oligarchy, is not able wholly to escape. In any system, is not what Burke said the real truth? "The true lawgiver ought to have a heart full of sensibility. He ought to love and respect mankind, and to fear himself. . . . Political arrangement, as it is a work for social ends, is only to be wrought by social means. Mind must combine with mind. Time is required to produce that union of minds which alone can produce all the

Maxim for the true lawgiver.

good we aim at." This was in keeping with the same great man's dictum, that in any large public connection of men love of virtue and detestation of vice always prevail. To the general truth so broadly stated, history may demand some qualification, but the manful proclamation that the true lawgiver ought to love and respect mankind and fear himself, sets a cardinal mark of division between two schools of modern government. Men like Rousseau, Fichte, Mazzini, Burke, whose eloquence has wielded supreme influence in the political sphere within the last 150 years; or the men like Byron, Shelley, Burns, and the poets of freedom in continental Europe, had not much in common with the sword-bearer of English Puritanism, though what they had in common was

the root of the matter. Cromwell set the case in famous words: "What liberty and prosperity depend upon are the souls of men and the spirits — which are the men. The mind is the man." Yes, and the historic epochs that men are most eager to keep in living and inspiring memory, are the epochs where the mind that is the man approved itself unconquerable by force.

"The Mind is the Man."

What a withering mistake it is if we let indolence of mood tempt us into regarding all ecclesiastical or theological dispute as barren wrangles, all political dispute as egotistic intrigues. Even the common shades and subdivisions of party — Right, Left, Right Centre, Left Centre and the rest — are more than jargon of political faction. They have their roots, sometimes deep, sometimes very shallow,

in varying sorts of character. In forms hard and narrow, still if we have candour and patience to dig deep enough, they mark broad eternal elements in human nature; sides taken in the standing quarrels of the world; persistent types of sympathy, passion, faith, and principle, that constitute the fascination, instruction, and power of command in history.

Everybody who knows anything knows that it is waste of our short lives to insist on ideal perfection. Popular government, or any other for that matter, is no chronometer, with delicate apparatus of springs, wheels, balances, and escapements. It is a rough heavy bulk of machinery, that we must get to work as we best can. It goes by rude force and weight of needs, greedy interests and

stubborn prejudice; it cannot be adjusted in an instant, or it may be a generation, to spin and weave new material into a well-finished cloth. There is a virtuous and not uninfluential school, and Mill leaned in their direction, who think that there exists in every community a grand reserve of wise, thoughtful, unselfish, long-sighted men and women, who, if you could only devise electoral machinery ingenious enough, if they had only parliamentary chance and power enough, would save the State. That such a reserve should exist, should acquire and exert its influence, should spread the light, is felicity indeed. More than felicity, it is an essential. It must be the main text of every exhortation to a university. But this is not to say that the State will be fortified in its

tasks by special electoral artifices, with a scent of algebra and decimals about them. These are not easily intelligible either in principle or working to plain men; they are more likely to irritate than to appease, to throw grit instead of oil among the huge rolling shafts and grinding wheels of public government.

Ironies in the Drama.

Some of the most effective actors in the world's theatre have been, it is true, most sensible of everlasting ironies in the drama. "The most malicious democrat," Bismarck said, "can have no idea what nullity and charlatanry are concealed in diplomacy." It has somewhere been called the art of passing bad money. The three contracting parties to the Holy Alliance — the sinister confederacy that almost makes one regret Napoleon — attempted three or four months after

Waterloo to bind one another to make the precepts of the Christian religion, as set forth in Holy Scripture, the sole guide of their public conduct, with what edifying results Europe was soon to learn. In the tortuous negotiations among the representatives of the Powers before the battle of Leipzig, it was once proposed deliberately to insert a false citation. The British representative was Lord Aberdeen. He electrified his colleagues by declaring that as a man of honour he would never sign a lie. English diplomatists have not seldom found themselves in difficulties from the simple, direct, blunt turn of our average British mind. They are disposed, as it has been put, to take words at their face value, while foreign ministers and publicists of subtler mould and susceptibility, are apt to read inter-

pretations into our plain words that in negotiation prove a stumbling-block and an offence.

Bismarck was fond of an iron ring from St. Petersburg, with a favourite Russian word inscribed upon it, *nitchevo*, — like the corresponding Irish word that pleased Sir Walter Scott, *nabochlish*, — "What does it matter?" His table-talk, like Luther's, or Lincoln's, or Cavour's, was coloured by a satiric humour that it would be foolish to count for cynicism, scepticism, pessimism, or any other of that ill-omened family. It was only one of the cheerful tricks of fortitude. Such moods have nothing in common with Leopardi's poetic gloom over the hypocrisies of destiny; or the dare-devil wit of *Don Juan;* or the mockeries of Heine; least of all with Swift, — a born politi-

cian, if ever there was one, but one who had no political chance, and avenged himself by letting irony blacken into savage and impious misanthropy. Without making the mistake of measuring the stature of rulers and leaders of men by the magnitude of transactions in which they found themselves engaged, none at least of those who bear foremost names in the history of nations, ever worked and lived, we may be sure, in the idea that it was no better than solemn comedy for which a sovereign demiurgus in the stars had cast their parts.

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